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Mary Thornton.

BALMORAL

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A ROMANCE OF THE QUEEN'S COUNTRY

BY

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'THE CITY OF SUNSHINE,' 'LIFE OF LORD KEITH,'
'SCOTLAND AND SCOTSMEN IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY,'
'CHARLES KIRKPATRICK SHARPE,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCXCIII

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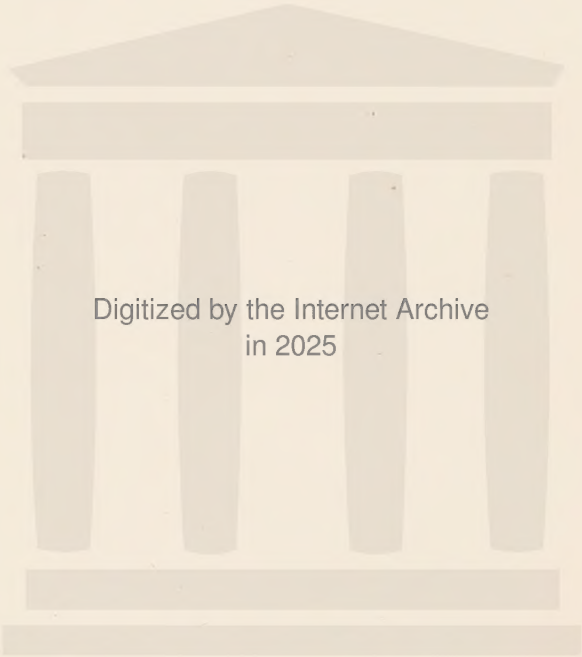
BOOK II.

THE GREAT HUNTING

(CONTINUED)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BALMORAL.

CHAPTER XV.

The bright sunshine, streaming in at the window of our little apartment, roused me betimes in the morning, rested and refreshed. In marked contrast with the riot and revelry of the previous evening, a deep silence reigned over all, broken only by the heavy breathing of my companion and the cheerful chirping of the house-sparrows as they fluttered about outside in the morning sunlight. My curiosity was eager to see what the appearance of this country was into which I had fallen, now that the cover of darkness was removed from it;

and I quietly rose and dressed myself without disturbing the Professor. But as I drew on my boots and was obliged to stamp on the floor, the noise made so far an impression upon him that he turned in his bed and gave voice to two or three inarticulate groans.

"Eh, what, Dauvit," he grumbled, "the college bell has na rung yet? But, Lord preserve us! what a head I have! And a mouth like Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, yea, seven times heated! *Dolores inferni circumdederunt me,* the pains of hell hath got hold of me. And where on earth have I got to? Ah! I remember me now—Tibbie McVey's and these unchancy Hielandmen. *Et funes extenderunt in laqueum; juxta iter scandalum posuerunt mihi:* they have exposed me before the English stranger, and be damned to them. Dauvit! Dauvit Wobster, I say! bring me a stoup of small ale."

Unwilling to break in upon the Professor's penitential meditations, I stole quietly out, and found my way into the village street,

a straggling irregular line of low thatched houses built of rough stone or turf, with rude weather-beaten doors and narrow windows. The front of each house was graced by a dung-hill, and at every step unsavoury pools of green fetid liquid compelled me to pick my steps with discretion. The dwellings of the cows and poultry seemed to be mixed up with those of the human residents, and appearances of poverty and squalor everywhere abounded. What on earth, said I to myself, would the grumbling Gileses and Hodges from Culmford do were they bodily transplanted hither to scrape a living out of this bleak moorland or these sterile hillsides? *Ah fortunati nimium! sua si bona norint.* And yet to this day Giles and Hodge make their lot a grievance against not only God Almighty but His lawful vicegerents the Squire and the Rector. My heart felt for the poor peasantry of the soil, doomed to struggle for existence in such a barren tract; and to give it vent I addressed an old labourer, whom I found

already shearing a little patch of half-green corn just outside the village.

"You have got but a poor harvest there, my friend, I fear."

"A puir hairvest, say ye," responded the ancient, as straightening his back he deliberately looked me all up and down. "Ye will be a stranger, I'm thinkin'? Frae the Soouth, maybe?"

"I am an Englishman," I answered.

"Aweel, I just thocht sae," was the reply; "and as for the hairst, it is doobtless nae sae heavy as in a mair forward year; but, man, it will mak' grand free aitmeal. There is nae mair kindly soil in the kingdom for aitmeal than the land aboot Bunty here."

"It seems to me rather a thin and sterile country," I ventured to urge.

"Thin!" echoed the husbandman, brandishing his reaping-hook—"thin! what wad ye hae? It's fine clean workable land, nane o' yer stiff deep loams that harden like a whunstane when they get a shoor o' rain, and that

twal owsen can hardly rug or rive a pleugh through, gweed only for growing wheat or sic-like unnutritious victual. Na na, naitur has been mair boontiful tae us in this country."

"Well, my friend, you should know best," I said, as I was about to pass on; "but it is rather chilly this morning, isn't it?"

"Chill—na. It is just a gran' day for the hairst," he called after me, as I was already stepping out.

Confound his optimism! My compassion gave place to indignation at the ignorant satisfaction of this Aboyne Bœotian, who could not, or would not, know when he was badly off. And I subsequently found that my interlocutor was but a true type of his countrymen all over. Whether they grumble among themselves or not, they invariably turn a contented aspect of their circumstances towards the stranger, mixed generally with a lofty pity for other nations that are much better off than themselves.

And now I stood alone on the moorland,

with no human being to distract my attention. To me it was a strange and wonderful scene, that at the first glance almost startled me into dislike. Amid the leafy solitudes of the woodlands, and by the banks of the stately rivers of my own land, I had been wont in the simpler and more innocent days of my younger life to woo Nature and have her speak to me again in accents that I could understand. But here there was discord. It was as if I were listening to a deep long-drawn note, sweet in itself, but jarring in its pitch ; its melody overpowered in its intensity. This at first. But as I looked round upon this unfamiliar view ; upon the morning sunlight flashing upon the hill-tops and flooding the valley ; the sloping sides which the mountains inclined easily towards the sparkling, dashing Dee—sides clothed in bright hues of brown, purple, and green, and striped with winding glens and ravines ; no motion to break the majestic silence of the mountains except the murmur of the Dee as it danced and flashed in the bright sunshine ;

and away in the distance, standing up haughtily against the clear blue sky, rugged ridges and craggy mountain-peaks looking solemnly down upon the lesser hills that wantoned in the glory of morning, as grave seniors regarding their children at play,—as I looked around upon this prospect, I felt myself drawn into harmony with it. Odours of honey rose from the purple heather around me, and mixing with the perfumed smell of birch-trees, added to the intoxicating effects of the sight. On my right a lark sprang up from the moorland, and hovering high overhead burst out into song; and its swift-swarming melody translated to me all that my heart felt, but could not frame into ideas. First pleasure sprang up, pleasure born of pure sense, then came delight; and as I looked and loved, I knew that Nature in this wilder and grander guise also could speak to me in human accents, and image her aspects in my soul.

I wondered, as I stood and mused there, how some of the men of taste and poets whom

I knew, would be affected if they could stand here beside me and drink in this scene. What an inspiring subject for the muse of Mr Pope! But no; he would arcadianise this romantic valley, and Pan with the Oreads and Dryads would be strangely out of place among the yellow broom and purple heather; and then he would most certainly outrage the solitude by some allusion to Sylvia and Belinda. That mighty rock-crowned hill in the distance—Clochnaben, as I afterwards learned—that would have to be sung to a very different tune from that of Cooper's Hill. Mat Prior? Gay? Pshaw! Nature has no place in our poetry nowadays, unless it be trimmed and garnished and served on a china plate.

I have lingered long over my feelings of this morning. It was my first glimpse of the Highlands, and though I afterwards saw scenes incomparably grander and more sublime during my wanderings there, yet the remembrances of that morning come most readily to my mind. I strolled along until I reached

the river, and stood for a while lingering over the stream, watching the swift flash and ripple of its waters as they darted rapidly onward. From a low-roofed cottage on the other side, a woman was driving out her cow to the pasture, and the dog that followed her started and barked at the appearance of a stranger. Away higher up, among the heather, a shepherd was calling to his dog, and the bleating of his sheep harmonised with the murmur of the Dee. I saw little to realise the wild savage wastes that I had pictured. If solitary, the valley was pastoral; and I had seen no signs as yet of the lawless and fierce denizens with whom my imagination had peopled it. And that reminded me that I must seek for these latter at my hostelry, and indeed evident indications of a healthy appetite for breakfast coincidently impelled my footsteps in that direction.

I would here remark once for all that never have I met with any region where the appetite is so sharpened as in that same Deeside,

Whether it be the keen Highland air, the exercise which you perforce must take in getting from one place to another,—a five miles' walk across a steep hill gives quite different sauce for a repast to what you get by dawdling on the Mall, or taking oars to Chelsea for your tavern dinner,—or the height of the country above the level of the sea, or all three combined, I know not; but this I aver, that nowhere have I ever sat down to my meals with better inclination or with a keener relish. Moreover, hunting, hawking, fowling, and fishing are the common occupations of the country, and as they furnish the food, so likewise do they provide the appetite. Nor is the usquebaugh, the liquor of the natives, to be disdained in moderation, as a stimulant to eating and an aid to digestion. Especially valuable is it as a whet before meals. Though the taste was strange to me at first, I speedily became reconciled to it as a beverage; and, thanks to my Scottish friends, I have been able to keep my cellar supplied with freely

distilled *aqua vitæ*, though Sir Robert Walpole's oppressive Excise Acts have rendered the supply more uncertain and precarious of late years. It is indeed a noble spirit, and deserveth well to take the place of the vile gin the taverners vend; for, as Meston once said, quoting Holy Writ, "it makes the mind of the king and of the fatherless both one, of the bond and free man, poor and rich; it turneth all his thoughts to joy and mirth, makes him remember no sorrow or debt, but enricheth his heart and makes him speak by talents."

Light-blue smoke rising up in spiral columns in the morning air told me that I should find the village stirring, and I hoped preparing for breakfast. Signs of life became evident on every side. On the moor, Highlandmen were rising from among the shrubby broom, where they must have lain all night, and making such toilet as they might, which seemed to consist chiefly of shaking themselves, tying their hose, girding their plaids about them,

and buckling on their swords. Round a fire in the open, two or three of them were busy with a big caldron, which diffused a pleasing odour of savoury meat; and one or two others, who seemed to be in command, were moving about, apparently mustering their men and getting them equipped. Fine stalwart men they were, dressed in a tartan in which the shades of green, yellow, and blue were the predominant colours. Inside the village, which I had left so quiet, all was hurry and bustle. Men in both the Lowland and Highland dress were moving about, or standing talking in groups. Numerous horses were being groomed down as they ate their forage in the open streets by the cottage walls; and I noticed the horses of the little troop led by the yeoman to whom my companion had spoken the previous night — stout but clumsy animals, which looked as if their lives had rather been spent in the furrow than on the parade-ground. These were the first signs of preparation for coming events that I had witnessed, and I

looked on with keen interest. But, great heavens! was it from a hamlet like this that a force was to issue to conquer the army of England—the veterans of Blenheim and Oudenarde?

Inside the inn, I found the Professor clothed and in his right mind once more. He was sitting on the edge of his bed, wiping his lips after the contents of a large bowl, which he had just handed to our hostess. "Ye are early afoot, Mr Bardolph," was his greeting. "I trust your rest was not disturbed by the compotation of our allies in the adjoining room. They're a camstairy race the Hielandmen, and when John Barleycorn gets the bettermost, they are too fond of fingering the dirk. So to check their brawling I was even fain to join their carouse, and for the sake of conviviality to exceed perhaps my modest measure, as my stomach remindeth me this morning. But I trust my presence was beneficial. There were no swords drawn last night, Tibbie?"

"Nane to speak o' bit yer nain," replied Tibbie, drily. "Ye were mintin' to stick that crabbit rung o' a Buchan lairdie, that cam' wi' the Yearl o' Errol, bit I trow I sune sortit the baith o' ye."

"Hem!" coughed Meston, "the cantankerous, quarrelsome carl that he is. But ye were verra richt, Tibbie, my woman, to interfere. I wad like ill to hae ony honest man's blood to answer for, when there are so many foes of King James's to face. I must see the laird, and make matters right. *Beati pacifici.*"

"Ye'll find him lodgin' at Tammie Dow's," said the landlady, "he's get nae harbourage here. He cuist oot wi' his lawing the last time he was at a Tarland market, sae when the breeze began betwixt ye, I just took him by the back o' the neck and the doup o' the breeks, and cantit him ootside the door."

"And now, Tibbie, we must have breakfast, but first ye'll bring Mr Bardolph his morning. He has been up and out this hour

by-past, and I'll take another with him, just to be neighbour-like.

"'A morning,' Mr Bardolph," continued the Professor, as Tibbie disappeared to do his bidding, "is in our native tongue that *poculum mane haustum* that awakens our wits and energies for the business and toils of the day; and in this hyperboreal clime, where cold is apt to settle on the stomach on the first egress to the open air, 'tis a custom highly to be commended."

"I think Solomon alludes to it, though not in complimentary terms."

"Solomon, I doubt, took his meridian along with his morning. The sternest moralists are made out of the greatest rakes. Nowhere is vice so grandly denounced as in the pages of Sallust, and I wot well he was but an evil liver."

A barefooted girl appearing with the liquor, I pledged the Professor to please him, and to keep him in countenance, for the good man was still somewhat shamefaced after his last

night's exploits; and then we proceeded to make a hearty breakfast, in the room where we had supped, ordering meanwhile our horses, that we might ride to the castle to meet my Lord Mar and the other loyalist leaders.

CHAPTER XVI.

Aboyne Castle, a tall irregular building, half castle, half mansion, the principal feature of which was a tall square tower, pierced by long narrow windows, stood in a sheltered corner of the hill-foot, a short ride from the hamlet. Against a background of birches and firs, which spread up the hill-slopes, the white walls of the castle made a fair show. Over the tower waved the family banner with its blazonings, being, as Meston learnedly explained to me, azure a chevron—to mark the Earl as a cadet of the great ducal house of Gordon—between three boars' heads, couped within a double tressure, which, he added, "ye may take to clearly indicate sibness to the royal family of Stuart, the distinction being rarely, and only

for the most eminent merit, granted outside the royal kinship, as it had first been bestowed upon King Achaius, of happy memory, by the Roman Emperor, Charlemagne."

While Meston was discussing with great prolixity of the origin and dignity of the house and clan of Gordon, which, according to him, had exercised an almost royal power to the north of the Grampians in the days of the Scottish kings, until their strength had been broken and their resources wasted by Argyll and the Covenant, we were approaching the castle. All over the park, in front of the building, were scattered parties of men and small bodies of horse, evidently the followers of the personages who were taking counsel within. The martial dress of the Highlandmen, with their bare legs and tartan kilts, their bonnets crested with the spray of some flowering shrub or a sprig of heather or ivy; their polished targets, long fowling-pieces, and bright-hilted claymores; the sturdy Lowland yeomen, in buff coat or breastplate, with

ancient steel caps, or cocked hats of the days of James II.; a standard flying here and there; pipers swaggering about, and now and then impatiently bursting out into a snatch of some note of defiance or onslaught; groups of bare-legged men stretched at ease upon the grass, or in the shade of the trees,—all made up a lively and exciting scene, and even my jaded and unenthusiastic temperament was stirred; and it was with roused and quickened spirits that I was ushered into the council of the chiefs.

At the head of a table in a large room sat Lord Mar, the easy ingratiating aspect of his countenance, which had struck me so much at previous meetings, clouded with a dash of bitterness and obstinacy. The fixed smile which usually sat upon his lips had more the turn of a sneer, and his demeanour suggested a mixture of dogged persistence and injured susceptibilities. The lofty air which had always distinguished him was now ruffled, and seemed to have encountered superior

pretensions, with which he had to struggle. We had broken in upon the deliberations, evidently, at an inauspicious moment; and there was a constrained silence as Lord Mar welcomed me with an air of condescension and patronage, which seemed to me a deal overweening, but into which there was still infused a species of cordiality and courtly flattery.

"Mr Bardolph arrives, my lords, in the very nick of time, to confirm your lordships in the facts which I have been endeavouring to instil into you—the overpowering interest which this rising for King James's cause will excite in the southern kingdom. Here is a gentleman who has undergone many hardships and much fatigue in order that he might reassure us, in this remote part of the country, of the zeal and loyalty which the friends of the Stuarts in England and elsewhere are prepared to manifest for the Royal Cause as soon as we have given the signal. My Lords Huntly, Marischal, my Lords Southesk, Aboyne, Carnwath, let me present to you Mr Edward Bar-

dolph, a late member of the British Parliament, who has resigned his seat and his place rather than serve under the usurper. Mr Bardolph is the heir of Sir Robert Bardolph of Culmford, a cavalier of ancient loyalty, and of much eminence and weight in the Midland counties, being the direct representative of the Lords Bardolph, a peerage which we hope to see shortly revived in the right line."

The Earl spoke with an assurance as if the fountain of honour had become his own private cistern, but the allusion was not unpleasant, and probably had some effect upon the nobles, who saluted me with courtly gravity.

"Mr Bardolph," the Earl went on, "comes fully commissioned by the most influential citizens of London to assure us of their zealous co-operation in the cause of King James. It is to London, my lords, that we must look where money is in question, and Mr Bardolph's presence here is an assurance that if we find the men, England will find the means; and what with the Treasury of King Louis, and

the coffers of the London merchants open to us, there will be no lack of the sinews of war."

"Has Mr Bardolph brought immediate supplies with him?" asked the Earl Marischal.

I shook my head; but before I could explain that the Earl of Mar had somewhat exaggerated my mission, and that I was scarcely empowered to pledge the assistance of those who had sent me until I had satisfied myself of the prospects of the rising, Lord Mar again broke in—

"It would have been premature to talk of any immediate subsidies at the time Mr Bardolph left London. There was no force then in the field, and, until I had consulted you, my lords, how could I promise to raise one? It remains with yourselves now to show a unanimity and resolution which will satisfy Mr Bardolph that he is justified in reporting to those who have sent him our zeal for King James's service, and our power to re-establish him on the throne of St James's. For God's

sake, my lords, led us decide boldly and like men of action, and not argle-bargle like a committee of burgess representatives in the old Parliament House."

"Action! I have always been for action," exclaimed the Marquis of Huntly; "but it must be for action that is firm, resolute, and sure in its effects. My lords, this is no mere Trot of Turriff or descent on Inverlochy—not a paltry raid upon Lowland Whigamores; but a rising against the ruler of three kingdoms with a great standing army at his back. I trust no man will question my courage when I cannot think with light-heartedness of the risks which we are asked to run."

The army, Lord Mar hastened to explain, was only waiting to join King James as soon as his standard was displayed. The Guards, both horse and foot, were Jacobite to a man, and would secure the person of the Elector as soon as King James had given the signal. The great mass of the troops were discontented even to the verge of mutiny. The new king

was filling up all the important commands with his favourites, and discarding the old and tried officers whom the soldiers trusted, and would alone follow. The Elector's confidence was given wholly to the German mercenaries with whom he would speedily garrison the country, while the native soldiers were being disbanded. All over there was discontent, that only wanted the torch to be applied to burst out into flame. As for England, the whole population was mad for Church and King, and once across the Tweed the march to London would be like a Roman triumph. Never was there such an opportunity for effecting a glorious restoration, and a heavy responsibility of indifference to the claims of their injured king and their suffering country would lie upon them should they neglect it. Lord Mar argued with an eloquence that evidently made much impression on the minds of his hearers, and at every other assertion he turned towards me as if for corroboration; but though several times I would have spoken in qualifi-

cation of his views, he gave me no opportunity of putting in a word.

"Is there any news of Lord Derwentwater and Widdrington in Northumberland?" asked the Lord Carnwath of me. "Unless we hear that they are in the field, I for one am against making an hazard."

"They wait for our example, my lord," broke in the Earl of Mar. "If we in this remote part of the kingdom dare not take the first plunge, can you reasonably expect those within reach of the Elector's garrisons to be the first to open the campaign? I have letters from Forster, the member for Northumberland, informing me that all Northumberland, both Papist and Protestant, is ready to turn out to a man with himself and Derwentwater as soon as the first troop of Scots crosses the Forth."

"By my faith! if I were assured of that they should not have long to wait for me," replied Carnwath. "For, craving your pardon, my Lord Mar, and yours too, my lords, I

build more upon good trusty yeomen, well mounted, with broadsword and pistol, than upon these wild Highlandmen of yours, who will doubtless fight like devils incarnate while the fray lasts, but are ever too prompt to secure their booty by retreating to their own glens without waiting to see what next befalls."

"However true that may be of the westland clans," retorted Huntly, "I cannot allow it to be said of the Gordons. It is well known that men of my name ever postpone plunder to honour, and that is more than can be said of your moss-troopers, Carnwath."

"It would be idle to argue upon the honesty of either," said the Earl of Carnwath; "but, my Lord Mar, the matter stands thus with us on the southern border. Whenever the Highlandmen appear in the Lowlands in arms for King James, Nithsdale, Wintoun, Wigtoun, Kenmure, myself, and other loyal lords, will make ourselves masters of the Lothians and the western shires, and when we have

joined forces with the English Jacobites, all march merrily together to London. And so, my lords, the cast lies with you here in the north. I have said my say."

"The Earl of Carnwath speaks excellent sense," said Lord Mar. "Everything depends upon the beginning, and here or nowhere must the standard be raised. Come, my Lord Huntly, your zeal for the house of Stuart needs no testimony, as the history of the house of Gordon shows that there is no sacrifice so great that it will not make it for the cause of King and Religion. Let the crow of the Cock of the North be, as it so often has been, the rallying slogan of patriotism."

"If it was merely Sandy Gordon that were concerned," said the Marquis, gravely, "there should not be two words to the bargain. I am as willing to lay my head on the block for King James as my great-grandsire was for his grandfather. But, my lord, the ruin of a Marquis of Huntly extends far beyond his own person. His family and hapless

followers and tenants must drie the penalty of his mistake long after he himself has paid for it with his life. The Aucht-and-Forty Dauch of Strathbogie still smarts from the stouthrief and oppression which the Covenanters practised upon it after the Marquis George's fall. While we have jeoparded our own lives freely enough, we of the house of Huntly have always been cautious not to sacrifice the wellbeing of those whom providence has placed under us."

"Your lordship may make your mind easy both about your estates and your tenants," said the Earl of Mar, drily. "As his Grace of Gordon remains quiescent, Strathbogie is secure whatever betide."

"What!" broke in the Earl of Aboyne. "Would you have the Duke of Gordon, the representative of the King's Majesty north of the Cairn o' Munth from times immemorial, follow your banner? My Lord of Mar, this is too much."

"My father's years are proof against

any such sneer," cried the Marquis, "as his rank renders such an unworthy supposition impossible."

"No man can be more sensible," said Lord Mar with some show of spirit, "of my unworthiness of the high honour King James has done me in appointing me his Lieutenant in the northern kingdom, and commander-in-chief of his forces. But the choice is his Majesty's, and not of my seeking. And to be plain with you, my lord, I cannot think that the proudest Gordon in Strathbogie will demean himself by following the leadership of an Erskine of Mar."

Both the Marquis and Lord Aboyne were about to break in angrily, when the Earl Marischal interposed, "For the sake of peace, my lords, let us avoid this subject. 'Tis the old rock upon which all Scottish enterprises have been dashed to pieces. If descent and rank were to be the sole pleas for determining the guidance of an expedition like this, I conceive there are few who would dispute the

natural rights of the family who have been Great Marischals of Scotland since the days of Malcolm Canmore and the battle of Camus Cross. But this is idle talk, my lords. The man whom King James deems the best leader for his service is the man whom George Keith with all his kith and kin shall be content to follow, and ask no question whether he be prince or peasant."

"Ye speak my mind, Marischal," said the Marquis, frankly; "I draw my sword for King James's cause, and not for the aggrandisement of myself or any other noble. Upon what grounds his Majesty hath granted this commission of lieutenancy is not my business to inquire. What I complain of is that my Lord Mar has so few chances of apparent success to offer us in this project of his."

"We have no choice now," said the Earl Marischal, "between taking the field and being warded in Edinburgh Castle. For my part, though fond of meditation, I love it most in the open air, and shall take to

the bent. 'Tis but crossing the Rubicon, Huntly."

"Have with you, then," said the Marquis, bringing his fist down heavily upon the table. "I never meant to stand aloof from this enterprise, but I like to walk into danger with my eyes open."

"And now, my lords," said the Earl of Mar, drawing a mass of papers towards him, "we shall resume the discussion of our plans, that have been broken off by this little by-play, and we shall take Mr Bardolph into our confidence, that he may give his friends full reports of our hopes. And time presses, my lords, that I should be back in Braemar, where I have much to see to."

"And I to Bog o' Gicht," said the Marquis. "I shall crave the stirrup-cup of you, Aboyne, when this council breaks up. Avochie," he called out to one of a group of gentlemen who were waiting at the far end of the hall, "see that our people are in readiness, and our horses well baited for a long ride through the hills."

I was courteously invited to take a seat between Mar and the Marquis, and the discussion of the coming expedition proceeded with tolerable unanimity. There were two views, however, as to the campaign. Lord Mar urged an immediate descent upon the Lowlands. Nothing less would satisfy the Highland chiefs, and induce them to cast in their lot with the king. Their clans were in destitution; they themselves had no longer the means to maintain their followers since the subsidies paid to them by the Queen's Government had been stopped by King George's Ministers; and the prospect of a rich harvest of plunder off the Lowland Whigs was the great bait that drew them to King James's standard. Marching then upon the Lowlands, Lord Mar argued, they would be able to offer battle wherever they might be opposed, press on after a victory to the Scottish capital, and there proclaim King James and make themselves masters of all the machinery of Government. When Scotland was thus secured, they

would then be able to render any assistance to the English loyalists that might be necessary; but, as Lord Mar professed to believe, King James's English friends were so numerous that they would be in a position to give rather than to need assistance. The whole country, the Earl urged, only waited the signal to rise for King James, and the Whigs would scarcely be able to lift their heads, far less to strike a blow for the Elector, as soon as King James's standard was displayed.

The Marquis of Huntly, on the other hand, urged a more cautious policy. "Let us make ourselves masters of the north, and hold to the Highland line. The Elector will be compelled to send an army to endeavour to suppress us. In their own country the Highlandmen can overmaster any force that may be sent against them. Let us draw King George's army into the mountains; in the glens and the passes we can destroy or capture whatever troops we may encounter. When we defeat one army the Hanoverian Government will be compelled

to send another. We shall do the same with it. The rest of the country will gain courage at the sight of our successes; there will be general risings, which cannot be checked while we continue to hold the Government forces in play; and by the time that we have exhausted the Elector's military strength, the whole country will have been brought round to King James, the Whigs will have been utterly cowed, and a pacific and harmonious Restoration rendered possible. This," concluded the Marquis, "will humanely restrict the area of war, and will make King James's return more a work of goodwill on the part of the two nations than an effect of conquest."

There seemed to me to be much sense and weight in this counsel, but it was far from recommending itself to the other chiefs. Campbell of Glendaruel, who appeared on the part of the Jacobites in the West Highlands, declaimed very forcibly against the possibility of any stand being made in his country except

in conjunction with a general rising throughout the kingdom. At the first note of alarm Argyll would fall upon the Jacobites in his own shire, and in the Lennox and Nether Lochaber. They would be promptly disarmed and sent to Edinburgh Castle or Dumbarton, if the Duke did not care to take the trouble to hang them forthwith. Lord Carnwath also urged the impossibility of the southern lords making any head in the face of an overwhelming Whig majority unless they were to have the Highlanders speedily at their back. Even the Earl Marischal, who recognised the policy of the Marquis's plans, doubted the possibility of victualling an army in the Highlands for any length of time; and Mar closed the discussion by saying that upon no other conditions could they secure the aid of the Inverness-shire clans than by the prospect of an immediate incursion into the Lowlands. "When we see what befalls us there," he concluded, "it will be time enough to put the

Fabian policy of my Lord Marquis to the test."

A letter was then drawn up for circulation among the Jacobite chiefs and gentry, ordering them in the king's name to hold themselves in readiness for taking the field along with their friends and vassals for his service; and to disarm all such of their neighbours as were known to be openly enemies to his cause. "The king," thus ran the letter, "makes no doubt of your zeal for his service, especially at this juncture, when his cause is deeply concerned, and the relieving of our native country from oppression and a foreign yoke, too heavy for us and our posterity to bear, and when now is the time to endeavour the restoring not only our rightful and native king, but also our country to its ancient, free, and independent constitution under him whose ancestors have reigned over us for so many generations."

"Bobbing John is too many for us," whispered the Marquis to the Earl Marischal, as,

the council broken up, we moved towards the door.

"It is ill playing cards against an opponent who can take you with his king," returned the Marischal.

"Pray Heaven he be as ready with his sword as he is with his tongue. If he is as well versed in war as in statecraft, there may be hope for us yet."

"'Amen, amen, quo' the Yearl Marshal,'" replied that nobleman, as they passed out into the hall.

"Your experience of this morning will give you some slight inkling of the rude elements I have to master, Mr Bardolph," said Mar, as he extended his jewelled snuff-box to me with his old air of languid foppishness. "What would our good friends Bolingbroke or the Bishop of Rochester or the wits at Button's think of these uncouth clods who call themselves nobles. But *I* can manage them," he added, with a French grimace and a shrug of his somewhat

crooked figure—"I can wind them up like a clock."

"Well for you if you do not wind them up to the striking-point," thought I; but I prudently held my peace, and followed the Earl to the door.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was a relief to escape from this atmosphere of jarring and divided councils, and to find one's self once more in the open air. This noble amphitheatre among the mountains formed a more fitting scene for a council of war than the most spacious hall of St James's or Versailles; and the faintest heart present had only to look around him at the bold rugged hills to borrow an inspiration of strength. During the time we had been in the castle fresh arrivals had swelled the numbers outside to several hundreds, composed, for the most part, of chiefs and gentlemen, with their personal followers. Many wore the Highland garb; but there was a large number of low-country gentlemen with mounted retainers, whose

horses were picketed under a clump of trees at a little distance.

Lord Mar, who had mounted a horse at the castle door, accompanied by the Earl Marischal and Huntly, also on horseback, and by the rest of us on foot, rode slowly towards the gathering. A wild flourish upon the bagpipes, supplemented by the trumpets of the Lowland troopers, received the Earl as he rode up, while the air was rent with cries of "Righ Hamish-gu-bragh!"—"God save King James!" alternating with the slogans of the different clans represented, while every sword was plucked from its sheath and brandished frantically in the bright sunshine.

As the Earl pulled up his horse and took off his hat to greet the assembly, I contrived to place myself so that I could get a good view of his face. Would this halfpenny Machiavel, this *petit maître,* whose natural element seemed to be the sunny side of the Mall, with muff and clouded cane, rise to the enthusiasm which such a scene was calculated to excite in any generous

heart? But Lord Mar's thoughts were always difficult to read. In spite of his somewhat misshapen person, now concealed by cloak and breastplate, he sat his horse gallantly enough, and looked around him with a calm eye of mastery, his gaze apparently taking in many of those who were present, and looking around as if in search of others.

In a rousing harangue he then proceeded to set out the grievances of the country and the justness of their cause. With an expression of the utmost penitence, he deplored his own youthful error in having supported the Union, which had already proved the ruin of Scotland, and which the Elector of Hanover was taking advantage of to rivet more closely the chains of England's slavery round the necks of the free-born Scots. Both Church and State were being sapped by the Elector and his advisers; and no escape from thraldom was possible, except by recalling the ancient dynasty of their natural rulers. King James the Eighth had promised to redress their

grievances, and to restore the former freedom and security of the country. He therefore summoned them, in his name, to take up arms for the restoration of their rightful lawful king, who would be speedily among them, supported by the whole power of France. A general rising would immediately take place in England, and the Duke of Berwick, with a large force of French auxiliaries, had perhaps by this time embarked to seize upon the west of England in King James's name.

"Here among these hills," exclaimed Lord Mar, "we know little of what is going on; but if all the arrangements of which I am well informed are carried through, the Elector and his mistresses may be on the highroad for Hanover, and King James proclaimed from London to Berwick, before we can cross the Tay. Doubtless not a few of you have old scores to settle with the Lowland Whigamores, and would be glad to make them pay kain to the king's men; but an' we make not the more haste, we may find the whole

business settled, and the Lowlands under King James's peace, before we can mint a blow at them."

Here a murmur of fierce and impatient assent burst from the Highlandmen, who shouted their war-cries, brandished their claymores, and called to the Earl to lead them on against the Saxon Whigs.

"I know the men of Mar will always take care to be in time for the fray," he said, proudly, "and it shall not be my fault if we are not as far ben as the best of them. Muster, then—send out the fiery cross through every strath and glen in the country; come well armed, and with what victual you can readily carry. The trysting-place is Inver. And hear me," he added, with a fierce scowl, as he shook his clenched fist aloft, "if between the Buck of the Cabrach and Mount Keen any able-bodied man absents himself from his Majesty's musters without satisfying me or my officers of the why and the wherefore, or without compounding for his services, I vow

to God that I shall prosecute him with fire and sword before I leave the country. If there be any lukewarm among you, I rede him to take tent of the king's commission of lieutenancy, which I carry in my pocket."

Many gentlemen and chiefs then advanced and had separate audiences of the Earl, who, along with Huntly and Marischal, discussed with them the raising and arming of their followers. Lord Carnwath and some of the southern nobles withdrew a little apart, and carried on an earnest discussion among themselves. Meanwhile the Earl of Aboyne, in his capacity of host, was giving orders to stave in the ends of several large casks of usquebaugh to regale the men, who also assisted themselves to huge cuts of beef and oatmeal bannocks piled on a long wooden table in front of the castle. I had lost sight of my friend the Professor, and divining that there was a chance of finding him in the vicinity of good liquor, I strolled towards the place where the usquebaugh was being served

out in large horn vessels and wooden beakers, when my arm was caught by a tall middle-aged man, dressed in half Highland, half Lowland costume—that is to say, he wore tartan trews with riding-boots, and a laced coat and waistcoat, with a hat and feather.

"Your obedient humble servant, Mr Bardolph," he said, taking off his hat and bowing. "Though you do not know me, I am one that am much in your debt. My daughter has told me of your civility to her, and how you stood by her in her sore straits, even at the peril of your life. I am James Farquharson of Balmoral."

That was the thought that had flashed into my mind as he had first addressed me. And this was her father — well, a gentleman certainly, a Scotch one it is true, old-fashioned and rustic, but still a gentleman. There was comfort in the thought as well as in the fact that he was fully clothed from head to foot; for the idea of a wild chief of kernes and gallowglasses, costumed like Lacy the player

in the picture at Hampton Court, had with difficulty been kept in the background of his fair daughter's portrait which I carried in my heart.

I said something, I know not very well what, about the happiness I had had in being of some slight service to Miss Farquharson, who, I trusted, was in good health.

"You must receive her own thanks, sir. Since you have come to this country, I trust you will consider my poor house of Balmoral entirely your own, although I fear our simple Highland ways and fare will be but harsh usage for a courtier. When I heard that you had arrived I spoke to my lord, who is quartering many of his friends among the lairds in the strath, his own accommodation being limited, in respect that Mar Castle is little more than refitted since it was burned by the Whig soldiery after Killiecrankie, and the Earl himself having to lodge with Invercauld. The Earl said he would recommend you to my hospitality, and I am only sorry that I

have not better to offer you in these through-other times. But such as it is you are right welcome to it, Mr Bardolph."

My head bounded with delight. To be under the same roof with Bess Farquharson, to bask myself in the gracious light of her eyes, to feed on her sweet smiles, to be constantly in her company, to have her all to myself, it might be, was worth all the trouble, travel, and fatigue I had undergone. I swear to you that the sun from that moment shone with a rarer, a more brilliant splendour, the hills put on brighter and more ravishing hues of colour, the Dee leaped and sparkled like a fairy stream. I was in Arcadia, or was it Eden itself?

But Balmoral cut short my rhapsodies. "Come," he said, taking me by the arm, "we must go back to the Earl, who has still some orders to give me, and then we shall settle to ride up the water together, for time presses, and there is much to be done in little time."

Lord Mar was moving about among the

gentlemen, giving orders to this one, receiving information from another, and ever and anon telling his secretary to make minutes of some item. While Balmoral was speaking to the Earl, my attention was arrested by a Highlander whom I had previously noticed. This man, though little more than a youth, was cast in the mould of a Hercules, and his muscular limbs, as shown by his kilt, were models of sinewy strength. His face was handsome, with aquiline nose and dark flashing eyes, which were never for an instant removed from the Earl. He was fully equipped in the Highland manner. A handsome target hung upon his shoulders, he carried a long basket-hilted broadsword, two pistols with polished steel butts flanked the long dagger that hung from his waist-belt, and both his hands grasped the muzzle of a long Spanish gun. I had noticed that wherever Lord Mar went this man invariably accompanied him, and endeavoured to place himself in front of the Earl. I began to entertain suspicions of the Highlander's

purpose, and was thinking of pointing him out to Lord Mar, when he noticed him of his own accord. He paused in the middle of a conversation with Balmoral and other chiefs of the Farquharsons, and bending his brows sternly upon the Gael, moved his horse up to him.

"Are not you," demanded the Earl with a dark scowl, "Cattenach of the Ballochbuie?"

"I am Cattenach, my lord," was the reply, given in equally haughty tones.

"And you dare present yourself before me —you, who have killed my deer and wasted my wood, and beaten the men whom I sent to apprehend you!" cried the Earl, with gathering wrath. "You presumptuous vassal! I know not what hinders me from stringing you up to the nearest tree."

"You have too much need for me, my lord," said Cattenach, quietly.

Both men looked steadily into each other's face, as if taking mutual measurement, and it was curious to watch their different expres-

sions—the Earl's look of keen scrutiny, in which anger seemed to be giving place to something like satisfaction, and the calm, haughty, but not disrespectful gaze with which the vassal met his lord's regard.

"You're a bold fellow, Cattenach," said Mar at length, "and King James has need of such as you. Let your services in the field atone for your misdeeds in the Ballochbuie and Glen Gelder; for every deer you have slain let the life of a red-coat soldier pay the forfeit, and you will still find me your very good lord."

"You have ever been so, my lord," replied Cattenach; "but as for those who have come between us—those who have poisoned your ears against me——" and he glanced angrily round the group of chiefs who were standing about the Earl, and laid his hand upon the hilt of his dirk.

"No more of that," said Mar, sternly; "I can have no private quarrelling under King James's banner. Thank your luck that you

have escaped my just resentment, and take care that you give no occasion for tale-bearing in the future. Fall back, sir."

While this parley had been going on, my attention had been attracted to a commotion on the outskirts of the throng, and the crowd presently parting, made way for a man in the garb of a Presbyterian clergyman, who advanced with slow and deliberate steps towards the leaders. He was a dignified-looking personage, middle-aged and portly in bearing, and of grave and fearless demeanour. As he advanced I noticed Lord Mar shrug his shoulders and bite his lips, while he hurriedly spoke a few words to Huntly and the Marischal in an undertone.

"It is Adam Fergusson, the former minister of Crathie," whispered Meston, who came up at this moment, "a Whig, and a stout one too. I wager he has come over from his parish in Angus to try and turn back the Farquharsons. He has much authority with them all, especially Invercauld, whose governor he was. I trust

my Lord Mar will ward him before he can say anything." Meanwhile the divine had reached the centre of the circle, and was making his bow to the Earl, which Mar courteously acknowledged by raising his hat.

"You are welcome, Mr Fergusson," he said, "though I confess unexpected. I trust you are come to testify to your loyalty to your rightful king, and that, though your calling forbids you to aid his cause by the sword, it may at least have the benefit of your prayers."

"I come, my lord," said Mr Fergusson, with sad gravity, "on what I fear may be a painful and ungrateful errand,—such an errand as God in times of yore often sent His prophets upon —alas! how often in vain—to reprove the rulers of the land for evil and seditious counsels, and for misleading the hapless people to their destruction."

"Methinks you have come to the wrong place, then," said Mar, with a sneer. "Carry your reproaches to the Court of St James's, or if that is too far afield for you, at least to the

Edinburgh General Assembly. Here you find none but loyal gentlemen, the best patriots and truest friends of their country."

"The sin of rebellion, my lord, is worse than the sin of witchcraft. You are rising against a Government that hath been lawfully established by the Parliament and people of these realms, that hath restored and guaranteed liberty of conscience and freedom of the person so cruelly invaded by the House you seek to bring back. You, my Lord of Mar, who know so well of State affairs, think ye that King George's throne is so unstable as to be shaken by a partial rising, or that his armies, which have cowed both France and Spain, will fly before the bravery of a few Highland clans? Earl of Mar, you are leading out this people to perish in the wilderness."

"We are gathered here in council of arms, not convened for a field-preaching," retorted the Earl. "I desire you to go in peace, Mr Fergusson. Your sacred office will only protect you a certain length."

"Nay, my lord; but I must do my duty," said the dauntless divine. "I must speak to these men, who were once my people, and whose welfare, temporal and spiritual, shall ever be to me as my own. I must speak to Invercauld, who was once my pupil and always my care."

"Address yourself to me alone, Mr Fergusson," said the Earl, "to the king's Lieutenant-General. It is at the peril of your life that you dare to preach to any one here."

"Shall I shoot him, my lord?" inquired Cattenach, raising his piece, and bringing it to the cock with a loud click, at which an angry murmur ran through the group of Farquharsons.

"Nay, nay; ground arms, sirrah," cried the Earl, hastily; "we will deal with the minister ourselves. Mr Fergusson, we have listened to you solely from regard to your cloth, and now hear my advice. Firstly, get home again to your parish, Logie-Rait I think it is. Secondly, if you wish the memory of your

injudiciousness to-day forgotten, pray for King James and his cause in your public ministrations, and encourage your parishioners to take up arms in his behalf. Thirdly, if you do not do so, there will speedily be a vacancy in your living. And to conclude, my friend the Marischal here has a vault in his good house of Dunottar, already well known to gentlemen of your kidney, of which I promise you you shall speedily be an inmate, unless you at once remove yourself beyond the bounds of Strathdee."

"Come, come, Adam, my good friend," said Meston, taking the minister by the arm, "my lord's advice is sound. Slide your ways cannily hame, and wait the upshot. And, hark ye, a word in your lug. There is a changed world coming. Knox and Calvin baith are *in articulo mortis*. Lawn sleeves will soon be the vogue again, and toomer heads than yours have filled a mitre. So 'seek ye first the mammon of unrighteousness, and all these things shall be added

unto you,' as the auld Whig wife rendered the text."

"Ay, Professor, and so ye're there," said the minister, with a smile; "the wild-geese are aye on wing afore stormy weather. Back to your books, my friend, and to your students in the Marischal College, an' ye be wise. King George is a mair kittle customer to thraw than Aristotle, I trow."

"You have our licence to depart, Mr Fergusson," said Mar, impatiently; "we have heard you with singular forbearance. Will you now go in peace or as a prisoner?"

"Not before I have done my errand," said the fearless preacher. "Hear the word of God, my lords; hearken, friends; as it was in the evil days of old, so is it now;" and opening his Bible, he read in clear ringing tones, that were heard all over the assembly:—

"'*And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak.*

"'*So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it unto the hand of the king.*

"'*And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?*

"'*And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master; let them return every man to his house in peace.*'—First Kings twenty-second, verses fourteen to seventeen," and the minister closed his book with a snap, and looked boldly around him to watch the effect of his reading.

"Sic damnable Whiggery!" groaned Meston. "Many a better man has glorified God in the Grassmarket wi' a thrawn thrapple for fewer words."

"Where wass this Ramoch-keeleeat he wass

talking about?" asked a Highlandman who was standing by me.

"In the Lennox or in Menteith maybe, I'm thinking," said Inverey. "My father, the Black Colonel, was there wi' Claver'se in some of their raids during the troubles, if I'm no mista'en."

"This is intolerable," cried the Marquis of Huntly, urging forward his horse, and shaking his whip in the face of the minister, who never quailed one jot. "How dare you, sirrah, come into the midst of a loyal assembly with your Solemn League and Covenant? Little keeps me from cropping the ears from your head, and sending you back to your pulpit equipped as a true Jack Presbyter ought to be."

"Pray you patience, my lord," said Mar; "let me deal with him. Mr Fergusson, I respect your courage too much to allow you to harm yourself. You see yourself that your speech is not agreeable to many of my friends, so the sooner I twin you the better for both. Here, Cattenach, take two of my Mar men and

convoy Mr Fergusson up Glen Tannar and by Mount Keen to the top of The Ladder, and see that he takes the south road. Treat him with all respect; but if he shows his face on Deeside again until things are settled, he will meet with a different reception."

Cattenach, who during this altercation had kept the minister covered with his gun and his eye on the Earl, here signalled to two of the Earl's followers, and the divine walked away peaceably in their midst.

"Heark ye, Cattenach," young Invercauld called after them, "see that you give the minister an honourable escort. If as much as a hair of his head is harmed, your life shall answer for it."

"I don't hold my life on lease from Invercauld, or any Farquharson among ye," retorted Cattenach, turning back with an angry glance of defiance, "I'm Lord Mar's man."

"Be off with you, then," ordered the Earl, "and see that you are quickly back at Mar Castle. It may be that I shall have work for you to do."

The meeting then began to break up. Lord Huntly and his little band of Gordons were getting to horse to ride to Strathbogie, while the Marischal was preparing to return to Dunottar, with Lord Carnwath and other southern leaders in his company, who were setting out for their own estates to raise their vassals. The Earl of Aboyne, at the castle door, was offering the stirrup-cup to his departing guests. Wild strains of bagpipe music burst forth every few minutes, as some Highland chieftain gathered his followers together and prepared to march away. A number of Lowland troopers were carousing at the refreshment tables, talking and laughing with boisterous merriment. I have witnessed the break-up of an Epping Hunt, and I could not fail to make comparisons between that somewhat vulgar assembly and the present gathering. Was this real rebellion, or treason on the stage? Only the great grand hills, looking calmly down upon our proceedings, seemed to me to be in earnest.

"If you will ride with me to Gordon Castle, Mr Bardolph," said the Marquis of Huntly, "I shall show you by the way as wild a bit of the Highlands as you are likely to fall in with in this part of the country, and it may be we shall find time to kill a stag or two as we pass through the Blackwater and Glenfiddich. Will you take horse?"

"I fear I must lay an embargo on Mr Bardolph's movements, my lord," said Mar, smiling graciously; "his counsel and assistance are too valuable to me to be dispensed with at this juncture. I shall have to keep him, if not by me, at least in my immediate neighbourhood."

"So be it," said Huntly; "to our next merry meeting! my lords and gentlemen;" and draining the stirrup-cup, he clattered off with his Gordons.

"And now," said the Earl, when he had bid adieu to the other departing noblemen, "now for Braemar. The day wanes apace, and we have yet much to do. Mr Bardolph, you will

not think me inhospitable if I commit you for the present to the care of my good friend and servant, Balmoral, with whom you have already made acquaintance. Invercauld is my own quartermaster, for this glen affords but scant accommodation for the numbers expected. Many a man among us will have to couch himself among the heather, with the heavens for a canopy."

"Our ways lie together for some part of the journey," continued the Earl, "and we shall be able to have some private conversation. I have much to tell you that it imports our good friends in the City of London to know, and you will doubtless have some news to give me. Meanwhile, I have something to say to my Lord Aboyne here, while you make your preparations for accompanying me. Let all who are to ride with me to Braemar," he called out aloud, "be assembled on the muir of Charlestown within an hour from this."

While Mar went inside the castle with the Earl of Aboyne, I turned to look for either

Meston or Balmoral to guide me to the rendezvous. I found the former receiving some parting instructions from the Earl Marischal, who was leaving Meston behind him as his envoy at Mar's camp, until he himself should return with his vassals to the general muster.

"I am delighted to think, Mr Bardolph," said the Professor, "that we are still to be *compagnons de voyage*. In respect of the scarcity of quarters up the Strath, Balmoral has hospitably offered me a bed, so that we shall be able to pass our time in these solitudes in discourse of the *belles-lettres* and philosophy. And if I thought that it would in any way mitigate your tedium, I would make bold to read to you a portion of my Hudibrastic poem, 'The Knight of the Kirk; or, The Adventures of Sir John Presbyter'; your cultivated criticisms will be a boon to a poor homespun bard."

Mentally anathematising Balmoral's lavishly hospitable humour, and resolving that I would

find means to escape the threatened deluge of Scotch verse, I outwardly expressed my satisfaction at the prospect of the Professor's company. Inwardly I was fretting over the ruin of my hopes. An hour ago my mind had been filled with ideas of the solitude of Balmoral, and of having Bess Farquharson all to myself. Now, if Balmoral was thus in the habit of opening his house to all comers, heaven only knew how many roystering chieftains and tipsy professors there might be in the way to mar our chances of an interchange of confidence. But all this I dissembled.

In high spirits Meston guided me back to the hamlet and the little inn where we had left our valises, and here a lively enough scene was being enacted. Crowds of gentlemen were mounting and riding away in all directions, and Tibbie McVey's stirrup-cup was in constant demand. Had all the good liquor pledged that day to King James's health been gathered together, it might almost have floated his sacred Majesty and his French allies from

Bar-le-Duc to the Braes of Mar. Inside, the riot was indescribable, but our hostess on seeing us speedily cleared a way through the press, making Highlander and Lowlander alike reel to the side at the push of her strong right arm, to which no one dared to offer serious opposition. She conducted us through the back regions to the apartment where we had supped the night before. In a pantry sort of place in the passage we came upon our luckless landlord, who was measuring out usquebaugh from a huge cask into a number of pewter measures of various dimensions, singing all the while in dolorous nasal notes—

> "Thou shalt, as with a weighty rod
> Of iron, break them all;
> And, as a potter's sherd, thou shalt
> Them dash in pieces small."

"Noo may the muckle hornt deevil choke ye wi' yer Whiggery," cried the exasperated Tibbie, as she aimed a well-directed blow at the ears of her unmelodious spouse, which he, experienced in such fencing, adroitly evaded.

"Gin ye daur to sing ae bum here this day, unless it be 'The Yerl o' Aboyne, he's brisk and he's fine,' or maybe 'We'll up the Muir o' Charlestown and ower the Water o' Dee,' the deil tak' me gin I dinna hae the weasand o' ye slit this nicht. There is mair nor ae man in the hoose that wad dae the job for a tass o' brandy, and there are a wheen braw bare-leggit lads ayont Culbleen that wadna leave Tibbie lang in widowheid. Sae, draw a stoup o' brandy for the Doctor and the English gentleman, and be dune wi' yer psalm-singing for the lugs upon your heid."

We sent a message to the stable desiring the attendance of the Professor's servant, and presently David himself appeared, in a state of glum and sulky depression, his head bound up in a dirty coloured napkin. Inquiries elicited that David had partaken freely of the hospitality of Tibbie's kitchen, and, emboldened by his potations, had dropped disparaging remarks regarding the honesty of the Highlandmen, and had in consequence had his

head broken by a MacGregor from Morven, "a common and notorious thief, out-fang thief, in-fang thief, and thief by open voice and common fame, so repute and holden," quoth David, solemnly, "wha was put to the horn at the market cross on the plainstanes o' Aberdeen nae langer syne than Candlemas, and I verily an' truly believe he wad hae durkit me where I lay gin Tibbie hadna wrested the gullie oot o' his hand."

"Foul befall her for so doing," was his master's sympathetic observation; "and you, ye gomeril, with your clavering tongue, had better weigh your words until you are back inside the Nether Kirkgate port again, unless ye want a skean in your wyme. And now, get our horses without more ado, for we must ride incontinently."

"Gin it werena for the mace at Marischal College, the deil a step of his tae would Dauvit ride wi' ye," grumbled the servitor; "but I trow that is worth some fash. The College wants a new sacrist as muckle as the throne

wants a new king, and it will dootless be Jeems's pairt to specially remember them that he is sae muckle behauldin till. Hech ! I think I see that shochlin' creatur', Robbie Broon, when I tell him to strip off his gown an' pit it on my shouthers. Him a sacrist !"

"Poor Dauvit, like too many of us, has his own advantages to serve by a glorious restoration," said the Professor, with a smile ; "he is a useful rogue and attached to me, but I do not believe I would have got him to go 'out,' but for the prospect of being made sacrist of the *Academia Mariscallana*, with the insignia of the blue gown and the mace. Well, well, there was never yet pure patriotism without a grain of alloy, and I would that King James when he comes to his own may find all his supporters as easy to satisfy as Dauvit Wobster."

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was well advanced in the afternoon before we quitted the village of Aboyne in Lord Mar's train, a body of some threescore horsemen, with a crowd of Highlandmen on foot, who accompanied the riders, sometimes walking and sometimes running, but generally keeping well up with the horse, in spite of the brisk trot at which we set out. No effort at order was maintained except in front, where the Earl rode with some of the principal gentlemen of the party; and the mixture of horse and foot, Highlandmen and Lowland troopers, buff coats and plaids, steel caps, cocked hats, and plumed bonnets, formed a picturesque cavalcade. Whenever we overtook a body of Highlandmen who had been at the muster in

the morning, and were now making their way home to their glens, they would halt and dress their ranks by the wayside with tolerable precision, until we had passed them, their bagpipes shrieking a wild point of war all the while. The associations were inspiriting. We might have been embarked upon one of those raids that I had read of Montrose and Dundee making in the last century, and I almost longed that we might fall in with a body of Whigs on our route, to expend our overflowing energies upon them.

Lord Mar was deeply engaged in conversation with various of his officers, among whom was Balmoral, and I was well content to be left to my own thoughts, and to mark the wonders disclosed by the Highlands, which we were approaching. We traversed a bleak heathery moor called Dinnet, one of the most desolate tracts I had yet passed through, and passed between the spur of an irregularly shaped mountain which trended down to the Dee, and the bed of the river, which here

narrowed in its channel, swept along with precipitous velocity. The hill was Culbleen—a bare bold mountain, whose sides were scarred by dry water-courses and grey cairns, while here and there time and weather had left bare its bones of whitish-looking rock. As we rounded the western side of Culbleen, riding high up on the slope above the river, a fair view unfolded itself. A narrow champaign, through which flowed the Dee, like a belt of glittering crystal, formed the bottom of a valley to which lofty hills stooped down on both sides, severed from each other by deep and gloomy gorges, into whose dark recesses the sunlight scarcely seemed to penetrate. The valley was bounded at its western end by a low round hill not unlike a cocked hat, whose crags glittered white in the afternoon sun, and round whose southern base the Dee swept with a swift curve, shut in on the other side by another hill of somewhat similar aspect. To these "iron gates" of the Dee—the simile brought back to my mind Captain Caliver of

the St James's, and his eternal stories about the Duke of Croy and the siege of Belgrade—we were now advancing. But what most attracted my attention was, over the green tops of the intervening hills which lay beyond, a mighty mountain, whose bare crest frowned down from heaven on the world beneath its feet. This was Lochnagar, a king among mountains; his dark beetling brow was turned towards us, and he seemed to overlook with gloomy haughtiness the throng of mountain-peaks that begirt his seat. As the eye wandered over its massive and stern contour and outlines, its towering height, its precipitous cliffs, its black ravines, its time-worn seams and scars, all fused together into a whole of matchless majesty and grandeur, I had never seen the like before, nor felt the same feelings of uplifted awe, though I had scaled the heights of Snowdon and Plinlimmon. There was a compelling glamour about this gigantic fragment of a world surely older than ours that held the eye and overpowered the senses when

one was brought within the circuit of its spell. Involuntarily the lines of Denham came into my mind, though how ridiculously inadequate they were to the prospect before me, and I quoted them to Meston, who was then riding at my elbow :—

> "Crown'd with that sacred pile so vast and high,
> That whether 'tis a part of earth or sky
> Uncertain seems, and may be thought a proud
> Aspiring mountain, or descending cloud."

"Ay," quoth Meston, "Sir John's lyre was fitter for the Thames valley than for Deeside. Yonder hill would have been a study worthy of Milton, whom, Whig and Puritan as he was, I cannot help bending the knee to; and if the old Tuscan had seen Lochnagar with his storm-robes on and the tempest-clouds lashing about his summit, he might have found another gloomy horror for his 'Inferno.'"

"Such a subject should surely be worthy of your own muse," I said politely.

"My muse, alas! My muse is none of the dignified nine who require to be propitiated

with invocations and offerings of perfumes and flowers. A free-and-easy enough lass she, a rattling, rhyming, ranting gypsy, who needs a glass of good liquor before she will yield to open her mouth. And though I may seem to you vain to quote my own crambo, nevertheless 'tis true that—

> 'All our nicest critics think
> Good rhymes the product of good drink;
> Nor can the water of Parnassus
> With wit enliven stupid asses,
> Like a full glass of forty-nine,
> Which clears the wit and makes it shine;
> And is found better, ten to one,
> Than all the springs of Helicon,
> To warm the brain and clear the head,
> And make a poem run with speed.'

"Nay, I dare but follow in the train of the great Butler; and if I can create but a Scots Hudibras and paint our Norland Jack Presbyters in their true colours, it is game enough for me, with an occasional lilt to eke out the bottle or to justify a stolen kiss, when the Kirk isn't looking on—*Nos convivium, nos prælia virginum, cantamus vacui.* But doubtless

Lochnagar will not always go unsung. The right *vates sacer* will turn up some day and drink to the full of its cup of enchantment."

We were nearing the end of the valley, which had here opened up to a considerable width, and bore signs of cultivation in small fields of yellowing corn and patches of grass, while here and there clusters of low thatched cottages were grouped together at the foot of the hill. The Dee, here running through a dead level, poured its glittering waters slowly along under a shrubby fringe of alders, birches, and willows. Beyond the river rose a ridge of hills, whose grey cliffs had been hewed by the chisel of time into a fantastic appearance of towers and walls with battlements, turrets, and domes, ruined and splintered by the artillery of heaven, and whose desolation the stunted trees and green shrubs which filled up every ledge and crevice where they could gain a foothold, marked while they failed to soften. "That is the hill of Pannanich," said the Professor, "and that deep pool of the Dee there

plays an important part in the legendary lore of the Strath. You must know that there was once a Culdee saint, Nathalan by name, in this place, and for some sin that he had fallen into—I know not what it was, but when you have seen the lasses here you may draw your own conclusions,—well, in his remorse he put on an iron belt like our King James of Flodden memory, padlocked it, and threw the key into yonder pool. He then went on pilgrimage to Rome, and one day at Ostia he bought a salmon —he would have been wiser to have fasted on mullet there, but I daresay the good man's thoughts were with the fish of his native river. When the salmon was opened, the identical key that he had thrown into the Dee was found, without a speck of rust on it, and Nathalan knew that his sin was pardoned. After such a miracle his Holiness could do nothing less than make a bishop and a saint of him, and the worthy man came back and built that church which we have just passed, and which the Presbyterians for the time have laid their

sacrilegious hands upon. But we shall soon order that better, though in truth it looks as if it would soon be only good for a sacristy for bats and owls."

We were now entering a narrow pass at the extremity of the valley, the round hill which had been in our front shutting us off from the river, and from a craggy summit sloping down with a gentle declivity, covered with old and scrubby birches, to the bottom of the defile. On our right hand towered a wall of cliffs, grey, broken, and bare, with heaps of stones at their bottom, and here and there a tree clinging to some cleft or crevice, as if for death or life. This, so Meston told me, was the Falcon's Craig, the rendering of some unrememberable name in Gaelic, and the bird had chosen its eyrie well. No falcon, however, was to be seen, but a pair of ravens croaked their comments on our cavalcade from a rock overhead, and a large buzzard—"a gled," so Meston called it—was startled, and winged his flight behind the hill. The pass seemed a position of great natural

strength, and I was thinking against how great odds a handful of determined men could hold its upper end, when I was attracted by a commotion in the front of our party, which suddenly came to a standstill.

Meeting us in the middle of the pass was a small drove of cattle, followed by three men, one of whom had the appearance of a well-to-do farmer, and was mounted on horseback. They all carried swords, and the two on foot also bore Highland targets, such as Lord Mar's own followers carried, slung from the shoulders. The first impulse of the new-comers seemed to be to hurriedly drive their cattle off the road; but as the beasts naturally refused to take to the rocks, their next impulse was to turn and escape. But flight was also in vain. At a signal from one of the chiefs a score of Farquharson clansmen had taken to the hills on both sides, and leaping from stone to stone and from rock to rock with the agility and sure-footedness of goats, had headed the unfortunate drovers and seized the farmer's horse by the

bridle. Their cattle were already in the centre of another throng of Highlandmen, who penned them close together with their targets.

"Well done, lads!" cried their chief, Peter of Inverey, "the gangin' foot is aye getting, and beef is wanted at the Castletown to eke out the mutton and venison. But what does the man mean? Does he think he can ride o'er Craig-an-t-Shiobhaig as if it were a midden-heap?"

"Faith, Inverey, your father, if all tales be true, did it before him," said Meston, laughing.

"A man will do much when the red-coats are at his heels, and commend me to the Falcon's Craig when the other choice is the gallows," quoth Peter, sententiously; "but this chiel is fairly trapped, and they are taking him to the Yearl. Let us hear what is going on." And following Inverey, we pushed forward to where Lord Mar had halted. The unfortunate owner had indeed made a desperate attempt to force his horse among the rocks, and was in the act of dismounting with a view of taking

to his heels, when he was seized by his pursuers and dragged before the Earl.

"Who are you, fellow, and whence come you?" demanded Lord Mar; "and what makes you take to flight like a cateran or a rebel at the sight of his Majesty's forces? Where stole ye these cattle?"

"I'm John Forbes frae Howe o' Leochel, an' the beasts are my ain, honestly bought at the Tarnty [Trinity] fair o' Brechin, and simmered [summered] in Glen Isla; and for takin' to flicht, I trow ye look na as if ye meant muckle gweed to aither me or the kwintry."

"You are a daring rascal to say so," replied the Earl; "you are a tenant of Craigievar, I suppose, and a red-hot Hanoverian like your master. Heark ye, John Forbes from Howe of Leochel, you have met with a merchant for your bestial. King James buys them at the top price of the market, and our general commissary will grant you warrant for payment. And for yourself—how

many men can you raise for Craigievar's muster?"

"I'm rated for twa men, gun and sword," said the man, doggedly; "but," and he drew himself up and looked round upon his captors with sullen pride, "I never appear wi' less than sax men o' my ain hoose and kin, as some o' thae gentry o' yours," looking defiantly at the Highlandmen, "may dootless ken to their cost."

"Very good, John Forbes," quoth the Earl, "you and your six kinsmen shall have the distinguished honour of serving his most sacred Majesty King James the Eighth, who in return for your loyalty will reward you with a gift of the lands you now hold, since your laird has forfeited them by casting in his lot with the Elector. You will send one of your men to summon your six kinsmen to my standard at Inver of Mar within seven days, and should they fail to appear it sorely fears me, John, that our provost-marshal will stretch your neck. See to his custody, Auchindryne, and

let him send for his men. They will join Inverernan's company when it arrives. And now, gentlemen, forward once more."

As we rode out of the other end of the pass another aspect of this ever-changing scene revealed itself. Before us lay a sea of mountains rolling away towards the giant summits upon which the evening sun was already westering; and as with the sea, the eye failed to find rest, so varied, so irregular, so diverse were the outlines which it traced. The valley, now narrowed to a stretch of flat bank on both sides, showed but little of the river, which at every bend that it took was shut in by high hills on all sides. And here as everywhere Lochnagar towered high over all the other hills, the evening sun casting its light obliquely across the perpendicular face of the mountain, and revealing by their darkness the deep recesses concealed in his gigantic arms. Broken, irregular, and rugged as the landscape was, it had unity as a whole, and that whole was sublime. But while I would have discussed Longinus with

my learned friend Meston, policy in the person of Lord Mar called me to a conference, and I now joined the Earl in the front of the party, where he had hitherto been too busy discussing his plans with Generals Gordon and Hamilton to favour me with his notice. The number of messengers that were despatched in the course of our ride indicated plainly how vigorously the preparations were being pushed on for the rising. At every glen which opened upon our route—and these seemed to be countless—and at every hill-track which branched off from our road, a horseman would dash away from the main body and ride as for death or life for some other district, by paths that a west-country fox-hunter would have had qualms about taking; or a Highlandman, belting his plaid closely about him and slinging his shoes over his shoulder for greater expedition, would breast the hill with the speed of one of its own native deer. What fateful excitements were not these messengers of insurrection and war destined to raise beyond those

hills that looked down so calm and immovable upon the growing turmoil!

The Earl began by congratulating himself upon the special good fortune that had sent him a councillor in his difficult and perilous task whom he esteemed and valued so much as myself. It was no use for my modesty to disclaim any capacity for giving advice; he knew my abilities well from the testimony of Bishop Atterbury—nay, he had reason to know that both Oxford and St John had marked my talents, and that, but for the Queen's death and the usurpation of the Elector, I would have been marked out for a position of trust in the Administration. However, the restoration of King James would revive my prospects. Place and honours would be redistributed; I might confidently depend on the old Bardolph peerage being restored to the family. My uncle Sir Robert—here I ventured to interject that Sir Robert had introduced an heir into the family who would stand between me and any honours granted to its

head,—well, why should not the peerage be conferred on myself directly? No Bardolph had a better right to it than myself, who had taken the field at the first signal for King James. I had neither money nor land. True to-day; but to-morrow there would be all the Whig estates to cut and carve from, and King James would be at no loss for the means of rewarding those faithful followers who showed most zeal in his service. Here I ventured to recall the fortunes of the old Cavaliers at the Restoration. No, Lord Mar argued, that was quite a different thing. So very much of the land of England had fallen into the unrighteous possession of Whigs whose lot was irretrievably cast in with the Elector's, that there would be ample means for rewarding every loyalist—ample and over.

Moreover, Lord Mar assured me that I might ever count upon him to stand my friend with his Majesty; and this he said with an air that might have assured a less sceptical person that his business was settled.

In spite of the jealousies which he had had to encounter in assuming the direction of the king's affairs in Scotland — jealousies which he might dare to say no man of less political experience could have surmounted — he had now laid a sure train of success. In a few weeks he would be at the head of a force of fifty thousand men, which would swell like a snowball at every stage of his march towards London. He had managed to divide the Elector's most trusted friends; he could lay his hand on the army when the fitting moment arrived; and, in short, it seemed as if nothing was wanted but the presence of James himself to enable the Earl to place the crown firmly on his head. His Majesty had been his most kind and good friend; he had expressed himself satisfied with what had been accomplished; and he had heaped upon Lord Mar high office and honours which would soon be publicly declared. "Honours," said Lord Mar with an affectation of modesty, "far in excess of my poor deserts, though, I humbly venture to say,

not in excess of my devotion to his cause and person."

I thought of a certain letter which a certain nobleman had recently written, full of devotion to the Elector of Hanover and the Protestant succession, and the words of approbation which Lord Mar paused to listen to fairly stuck in my throat.

He then went on to speak of the other leaders of the Jacobite party, and the difficulties he had in taking the field with them, and would have in keeping them together. "Alas! Mr Bardolph," he said with a profound sigh, "how little is the pure spirit of patriotism the guiding motive of even the most lofty-minded among us. In this noble cause, which I look upon as holy and sanctified by heaven for the weal of our country, I have had to encounter the basest natures, and have even been compelled to make use of the most wretched arguments of self-interest, to fawn, to flatter, to promise, and all for the king's sake. It is every one for himself and no one for

Right. It is a sad prospect, Mr Bardolph, and indeed recalls to me the language of those Ethnic writers who have traced the decline and corruption of the body politic in the fall of ancient Rome."

This harangue was delivered with an unction worthy of Dan Burgess himself, but it made little impression, for I knew enough of my man to judge that his denunciation of self-seeking and ambition was another instance of Satan reproving sin. And so I held my peace, waiting for what I felt sure was to come.

And come it did speedily.

"And now, my dear friend, that we thoroughly understand each other, and that I have been able to give you my full confidence and impart to you my plans, I trust you will lose no time in writing to our worthy friends in the City, and tell them that we have crossed the Rubicon. Our success is certain, for in a few weeks I shall be at the head of a power which all the forces of Hanover may strive in

vain to resist. We shall sweep them before us as reapers mow a corn-field. Of all this you will lose no time in informing my good friend your worthy uncle. Tell him too—and bid him tell his friends—that we have men in plenty, but that money is sadly scarce among us ; that every shilling they can advance us now is of more use than a gold Jacobus would be three months hence ; that not only their future interests but their present safety is at stake, for all King James's adherents in the City are marked men, and unless he can come speedily to their aid, their liberties, and probably their lives, will be in peril. And now, Mr Bardolph, we are about to part for the night. Yonder lies Balmoral, where you will find better hospitality than I can at present offer you at the Castletown, and where you will have quiet and leisure to expedite your correspondence. I send a secret messenger to London to-morrow, who will carry with him any despatches you have to forward. Balmoral ! our roads part for the night," he called

to that gentleman, who now rode up. "I need not commend my friend to your attention, and you yourself will wait upon me at the Castletown to-morrow. *Au revoir*, Mr Bardolph."

The night had begun to fall as the Earl rode on with his company, leaving us, a little body of horse and foot, standing by the wayside. The darkness had set in in the bottom of the valley, but high above the western light still played among the hill-tops, which stood out clear and sharply cut, each craggy summit or rounded crest in bold relief. The Dee flowed darkly past, with a deeper and more swelling murmur than its notes of the daytime, that enhanced rather than broke the great stillness of the hills.

Crossing a narrow heathery moor, we forded the Dee, the river coming almost up to our saddle-girths, and rode towards a white square tower which we saw through the gloom among a little wood of birches and firs. It seemed to stand upon a level plain at the foot of a

low dark hill, while the river with a bend curved round its other side. Balmoral fired his pistol, and his example was followed by most of the company ; and at the reports lights were seen to move about in the houses, and torches appeared outside, while the loud voices of servants mingled with the barking and baying of dogs.

"Let me bid you welcome to my poor house, Mr Bardolph," cried Balmoral, as he leaped from his horse before the door, and came and shook me warmly by the hands. "I can never quit myself of my obligation to you. I trust you will some day show me how I can make you some slight repayment." That was exactly what I intended to do, but be sure I said nothing then.

CHAPTER XIX.

One glance, a blush, a soft and rapid pressure of the hand, some hurried words, I know not what they were, and our meeting was over. Yet one brief moment sometimes reveals the quest of months, nay, of years, and in the welcoming glance of Bess Farquharson's eyes I read a look which raised hope in my heart. It is through her eyes that the soul of woman makes its true confession. The lips may flatter, may deceive, the tongue may lie, the countenance may beguile ; but the most accomplished coquette is betrayed when you penetrate into the depth of her eyes. In vain does she droop her lashes, uselessly does she turn upon you melting or languishing orbs ; when sincerity lurks in the liquid depths, it can

neither be concealed nor mistaken. I myself have found this test infallible, and in the golden days of Queen Anne—but pshaw! let me on with my tale. That one glance told me that I was loved. I do not know what we said—some common words of welcome on her side, some stupid formalities about the pleasure of again meeting on mine. But the hall was in a hubbub, our companions were crowding in with hearty and boisterous greeting to the lady of the house, a fine-looking matron, who now appeared to welcome the guests, and to whom I was duly presented. Balmoral, who was all intent on hospitality, was giving loud orders to get meat and drink ready; and it was well for me that my confusion and abstraction passed unnoticed.

My host hurried me up a stone stair, called in Scotland a "turnpike," and ushered me into a small chamber in a corner of the tower, simply but comfortably furnished, and recommending me to haste and brush the dust of my journey off and come down and get some refreshment,

hurried away. A polite old Highlander presently made his appearance, and pulled off my boots, divested me of my riding-coat, and helped me to a change of garments from my mails, which he had brought up. While I was debating with some nervousness what I should wear,—my blue velvet and gold which I had only worn once, at the time I last kissed hands in the Queen's time; or the claret-coloured suit in which I had gone to St Paul's among the members of the Commons at the Thanksgiving for the peace, — my resolution was quickened by the appearance of Meston, who, vehemently declaring that a Highland appetite brooked no delay, and that my dress would be more readily pardoned than my longer absence, bore me off to the dining-hall.

There, in a long low room hung round with deers' heads and antlers, interspersed with arms, targets, swords, dirks, and pistols, and pierced by low narrow windows whose depth showed the thickness of the wall, I was placed on the right hand of the host in the seat of

honour. By him on the other side was his wife and daughter, and next to them my friend Meston, while the other places above the large silver salt-dish, which divided the table between gentles and commons, were occupied by the chiefs who had accompanied us from Aboyne. These were mostly kinsmen of Balmoral's of the name of Farquharson, and possessing lands in the neighbourhood; but there were also gentlemen from other septs, Gordon of Abergeldie, MacGrigor of Tir Igny, and Shaw Mackenzie and Macdonald, and a young spark called George of Coldrach, who to my disgust appeared to be very attentive to *my* Bess.

The meal was heaped upon the table with rude though profuse hospitality. There were salmon from the Dee, venison in haunch and brisket, roasted moorcocks, as well as huge dishes of beef and mutton. The claret was excellent, and there was also Rhenish and Burgundy for those who preferred these wines, and abundance of brandy and strong waters for those of more courageous thirst. For my-

self, the keen hill air had sharpened my appetite, and I proved me a trencherman with such good zest as evidently to raise me much in the estimation of my hostess, who was full of needless apology for what she called the poorness of her fare. Certainly had any of my friends of White's or of the Cocoa Tree seen how one dish after another disappeared before I laid down my knife and fork, they would have sent me over the whole town in dull lampoons. My host courteously devoted much of his conversation to me, and told me about his raising his tenants and vassals, and that Lord Mar had done him the honour to make him his aide-de-camp. His wife was curious to hear about London, and the simplicity of many of her queries amused me and called the red to the cheek of her daughter, while they not a little puzzled me how to make my replies intelligible to the good lady, who I found had never been away from the valley of the Dee and farther than Aberdeen all her life. At last, when Balmoral had given

the toast of King James, which was drunk with much enthusiasm, flashing of swords, and breaking of glasses, in spite of the lady's protest against the latter observance, that "the king's health would be none better, while her aumbrie would be muckle the toomer for the broken crystal." Then Meston craved a health to the hostess and the roof-tree of Balmoral; and then, when this was duly honoured, the ladies departed, and unrestrained conviviality prevailed.

Naturally the talk, which waxed loud and boisterous apace, turned upon the rising, upon the raising of men, the supply of arms and ammunition, the feats which were to be accomplished, the punishments to be meted out to hostile Whigs, and the rewards and booty that were to repay the valour of the victors. But I could not help noting that none of them seemed to have any real conception of the risks they had to run in confronting the trained armies of King George, the veterans of Spain and the Low Countries. Nor did they seem

to make much account of the chances of a general rising among the English Jacobites, the families who had kept the feeling of loyalty alive all through Oliver's time, upon which we in the south based our only hopes of a return of the Stuarts. It appeared to me that the company were much more concerned whether Rob Roy, a noted Highland thief, could be depended upon to bring in some few score of MacGrigors in the neighbourhood, than whether there was the chance of a general rising among the Welshmen and in the west of England, or whether Northumberland and Cumberland would flock *en masse* to Derwentwater's standard. If King James was to be restored, they were unanimous that it was to be done by the clans, and if these all turned out, other assistance was a matter of indifference.

"Oh, the English!" cried young George of Coldrach, the youth whose attentions to the daughter of the house had not prepossessed me in his favour. "Who cares for them? Let them stay at home and drive their plough-oxen

or mind their shops"—chops, he pronounced the word—"the lads wi' the kilts will manage the matter the better if they keep out of the way. We should only be taigled wi' thae feckless pock-puddings."

Before I could crush this Bœotian with a suitable sarcasm, Balmoral, mindful of my nationality and his duty as host, broke in—

"Ye speak like a fule, George, and should conceal your want of wit before strangers. The English are a brave and warlike nation when they take to the sword; and no people know that better than do we of the Clann Fiondlah. Have you never heard of the battle of Pinkie, which raised the Cairn-na-Cuminhe many feet higher with the stones of dead Farquharsons who fell with Findlay Mor round the royal standard?"

"Ay, and slain by the English too," retorted the youth, grinding his teeth—he had evidently been drinking freely.

"Gad! my lad, if you had seen as much of

the English as I have, you would not speak so saucily of them," said an old grey-bearded gentleman who was sitting a few places down from me. "I charged again and again upon a company of Hastings's regiment at Killiecrankie with sword and targe, and they drove us back every time we came on, while their balls were rattling about our lugs like haill-stanes. And in the end a party of Leven's came up to their aid, and put us to our heels as fast as we could scurry, although we were sixty as stout men as ever came out of Glenlivat and Strathavon. And in our flight we came across Claverhouse lying with a mortal wound. *Ochone-a-ri*, but he is the man that should have led us to-day;" and the veteran, with a sigh, buried his memories in a huge tankard.

"And that is true, Daldownie," said Balmoral. "My uncle, as ye may mind, was major to the Mar men at Killiecrankie, and I have heard him say the Mackays broke at the first rush of the Highlandmen, but that Hastings's and Leven's regiments held their ground

until they were deserted, after they had wrought the feck of the loss on our side."

Talk then drifted on to the commander, and very free comparisons were drawn between the Earl of Mar and Claverhouse, who had led the last descent the Mar men made on the Lowlands. Few of those present sought to conceal their contempt for Mar's military capacity, and several openly questioned even his courage; but all agreed that he was a dangerous and oppressive neighbour to those who did not stand well with him. Balmoral, as became his aide-de-camp, stood up mildly in behalf of his general and his feudal superior; but his defence was received merely as the expression of a pious opinion that did not bind the voices of the rest. But what struck me most was the little concern which the gentlemen present evinced for the capacity or incapacity of their leader, as if it were a matter of secondary moment in the coming campaign. When I came to know the Highlanders better, and to understand their peculiar mode of fighting, I

understood that this really was their feeling. Ignorant as they were of the art of war as practised by generals in the present day, they were little skilled in acting in concert. Show them an enemy, and their own sense or tradition told them how they could best defeat him; but they were utterly unqualified for being treated as pieces in the game of chess by a skilful commander. Claverhouse, I believe, was the only general who ever succeeded in handling Highland clans, and this he did, not by adapting them to his plans, but by forming his plans so as to make the best use of their untutored bravery. But then the Earl of Mar was not Claverhouse.

"This is the wrang side of the Pass of Ballater for speaking freely of my Lord Mar," said Meston, who was now in one of his elevated moods; "but this I will say of Bobbing John, that I challenge braid Scotland to show a doubler politician than him, unless it be his brother the Lord Grange. We have heard of a letter which he sent in the name of the Whig

clans to the Elector; but he, German as he is, was not to be whilliewha'ed by him. And then in the next instant he is your humble servant to King James, and wha but he maun be Duke and generalissimo? But since 'tis e'en so, 'tis his to command and for us to obey. So I'll just drink 'Confusion to the Kirk' in this tass of brandy, and sing you a song of my own by way of interlude."

And the Professor, who had a rich mellow voice, burst forth, to a plaintive and melting air, in a song on the evils of the country under the usurpation, of which I remember only the concluding stanzas :—

"O sacred James! let not thy lot,
Tho' seemingly severe,
Make thee suspect the cause forgot,
Thy crosses nobly bear.

He who thy heart has in His hand
(Trust thou His sacred skill),
Has too the people's at command,
And turns them at His will.

But thou, who sitt'st upon the throne
Of Stuarts' ancient race,

Abandoning thy rightful own
To fill another's place,

A crown's but a precarious thing,
Thy fate thou dost not see;
They who betrayed their native king
Will ne'er be true to thee."

This pathetic ditty was received with silent approval and deep drinking by all except the unlucky George of Coldrach, who seemed destined to be the apple of discord at the Balmoral banquet. That ingenious youth, who was fully more drunk than the Professor, had mimicked the air by whistling, and imitated Meston in wiping his eyes at the conclusion :—

"Oh let our panting hearts have peace,
And innocence restore!
Then shall our senate act with grace,
Offending thee no more."

"An excellent good song," sneered the tipsy youth; "d—n me if I ever heard a better droned out between the gravity of the halter and the decency of the night-cap. Just the sort of air a Whig might leap from the ladder

to the tune of. Hast got another one to give us?" and he laughed idiotically at his own small wit.

"I shall have another of the kind you mention ready for you by the time you need it, and that will not be a long day," retorted the irate Professor. "Set you up, to criticise my songs—a halflin barely emancipated from the birch, which hath surely been too rarely applied. For little I would mend both your education and manners, and teach you conjugate the passive voice of *tupto* to a tune of your own playing."

"Birch, by God!" cried the young man, jumping to his feet and making to draw his sword. "Birch your starveling bursars in the Marischal College; it is cold steel here."

The peppery philosopher was on his feet in a minute; but before matters could go farther Balmoral sternly intervened, and subdued his kinsman with a stinging reproach on his breach of hospitality in affronting a friend and a guest, and with a peremptory command to

quit the table if he could not behave himself, which had the effect of reducing George of Coldrach to silence. Balmoral then set himself to soothe down the angry feelings of the Professor, a scarcely less difficult task, for, like all poets I have ever known, Meston was not without a considerable share of vanity of his own effusions. He so far, however, recovered his equanimity as to join in the bumper which his host presently challenged him to drink to the speedy overthrow of "Cess, Press, and Presbytery," but staunchly resisted all further requisitions on his musical powers.

At last some of the more sober of the guests asked for the stirrup-cup, and roused up their still convivially inclined companions, who followed them to horse, *fatigati nondum satiati.* They made a picturesque group in the courtyard of the old white tower, which was darkly lit up by the glare of the pine-wood torches, that only made more distinct the dense blackness of the autumn night, while the hilarious parting salutations of the

revellers seemed weighed down by the deep and still silence that brooded all around. We stood outside until the splashing of water and shouts from the opposite bank told us that those who had to cross the Dee had forded the stream in safety, and we saw the torch-bearers who had lit their way to the water's edge returning slowly to the castle, waving their pine flambeaux about their heads.

And then, with one accord, we retired to rest, which came gratefully to me after the strange and varied experiences of a long day—my first day in the Highlands.

CHAPTER XX.

It was late next morning when I awoke from a long and sound sleep and dreams in which the memories of my past life were absurdly mixed up with my more recent experiences. I dreamed that I was in the woods near Binfield, walking with Bess Farquharson along a glade which I had once traversed with Mr Pope and Atterbury, when the Bishop and I had visited the poet in his rural retreat; and as we strolled along arm and arm, and I was just about to pour forth the passion of my heart, a band of Highlandmen, headed by my old antagonist Burnett and George of Coldrach, rushed between us, and overpowered me and dragged me away into the forest. So vivid was the dream that when I opened my

eyes I almost expected to find the old oaks of Windsor Forest overhead, but there were the brown hills bathed in the morning sunlight seen through the narrow window of my chamber. I hastened to rise and look out on my surroundings. Before me the Dee made a rapid bend, surrounding the meadow on which Balmoral stood on three sides, hemmed in beyond by steep rugged banks, clad with birches and alders, and here and there a few old firs. From the top of the bank on the other side the hill sloped gently upwards, showing patches of cultivation, green grass, and white barley, and yellow corn, until it met with the heather, which stretched away to the sky-line. Small herds of black cows and small shaggy dun cattle grazed in the fields and strayed upon the heather. To the left, on a slope looking down on Balmoral, were the white buildings and tower of Monaltrie, flanked on each side by clumps of tall ashes; and behind it and further up the hill were the cottages and crofts of the immediate retainers of that chieftain.

On the west, a long rugged hill, its lower range covered with dark birches, through which grey crags peered forth, shut in the view. Another mountain, its summit and sides rough with rocks and cairns of small stones, completed the semicircular prospect. Down from a high moorland on the shoulder of the latter hill flowed a small stream whose course might be traced by the turnings of its grassy banks among the heather, while lower down it had cut out for itself a deeper ravine, through the bottom of which it brawled downwards to the Dee. It was a perfect Highland solitude. Life there was, but it broke not the stillness: men were shearing corn on their little hillside fields; women, too, joined in the harvest labour; and children played about the shocks, while they kept a lax eye upon the cattle they were tending; sheep were feeding on the higher moorlands and among the green patches of bog,—all these were absorbed into the peaceful solitude of the scene; the lonely majesty of the mountains brought all

life and motion into perfect harmony with itself. The solitude was more than picturesque; it was pathetic.

To me, dreaming over the landscape while I lazily dressed myself, entered the Professor in his morning *deshabille*—an old *roquelaure*, which did duty for a dressing-gown—his wig very much on one side of his head, and a red woollen nightcap perched upon the other. Meston was melancholy, as he often was of a morning, and the fires of last night's revelry were scarcely extinguished in his head and gullet.

"Awake at last," he said; "and here have I been scribbling verses since daylight—*Aurora musis amica necnon vespera*, you know—to make me forget the fumes of Balmoral's toddy. Excellent stuff it was too. I suppose they have not brought you your morning yet. Now, you who are a poet and a scholar, tell me what you think of this. It is an ode to King James's birthday, and I pray God I may live to present it to him

on my bended knee next 10th of June, at St James's." The Professor read some score or so of Latin verses, of which, in spite of his Scotch pronunciation, I could catch the sense and something of the spirit, enough to give me a slight pretext for the warm encomiums I poured forth upon his work, which I unhesitatingly declared to be worthy of the best efforts of Atterbury or Addison. Obviously flattered by the compliment, the Professor paced the room with as much dignity as his odd attire would admit of, repeating with much complacency the last two lines:—

> "Scotia prisca Deis tum læta litabit avitis,
> Angligenum culta Grampia templa cluent,
> Arcadiumque pecus laqueis sua funera quæret,
> Reddetur templis docta caterva suis."

"I must have a couplet to close with, *docta caterva suis, docta cat*—by the Lord! there is Angus Shaw out in the passage, and now we shall have our morning. Angus! I say, Angus, come hither!"

A respectful old Highlander, who was a sort

of major-domo or butler in the house, now appeared, and to Meston's suggestion of a "morning," apologised for not having appeared sooner; but the laird and his friends had already breakfasted and ridden off to the Castletown to join the Earl, and had given orders that Doctor Meston and the English gentleman should be allowed to sleep off their fatigue, and they would find breakfast waiting them at any time they liked to descend. But he would fetch us "a morning" "with pleeshure."

And he speedily did so, when Meston interrupted his walk and the recitation of his verses to turn down a mighty cup of strong waters. My English taste declined to imitate his example, notwithstanding a solemn warning from Meston against beginning the day with nothing on the stomach, and a compassionate shake of the head from Angus at my weakness.

"Well, well," quoth the Professor, draining his beaker, "*suum cuique*—to ilka man his ain measure; and that a good custom may

not be broken, I'll drink for you as your deputy. Fill another, Angus; *capaciores, puer, huc affer scyphos;* and I'll just finish these lines and be down to breakfast in a jiffy. My duty to your lady, Angus, and I hope she will honour Mr Bardolph and me with her countenance at our meal. And now, *pergite Pierides,* let us see what we can make of these damned dactyls."

And while I finished my dressing he strode up and down muttering to himself, and occasionally stopping to take a sip. "*Evoe!*" he at length called out, "I have got it:—

> 'Talia secla solo tum current Scoto-Britanno,
> Cum reducem videat sceptra tenere Deum.'

By the blessing of Bacchus, there's a birthday ode before breakfast; and when the justly exasperated Muses hand over Nahum Tate to the Furies, King James will know where to look for a poet-laureate. And now I'll just put on my coat and wig, and see what cheer lady Balmoral has provided for us."

Our breakfast-table was garnished with

viands that might have satisfied the sharpest appetite of a company of soldiers; but the mistress was profuse in apologies for the sparseness of her fare and the rudeness of her cooking, apologies which must have been purely ceremonial, since the one was ample and the other excellent enough to satisfy a more delicate palate than I could boast of. She was sure I would not be able to eat the food of the country, for her daughter had told her great things about the London tables, and that persons of consequence kept French cooks. No such thing had ever been heard of on Deeside, and she did not believe that Lady Aboyne or even the Earl of Mar had ever had a Frenchman in their kitchens. They just lived like the "lave" when in the country. She was quite ashamed that she could give me no tea, which some people of condition were now beginning to use in Aberdeen and even nearer home; but though Balmoral had once brought her a packet, nobody had known very well what

to do with it, and nobody liked it. Indeed, everybody who had tried it had had to drink brandy to "pit awa' the taste"; and the good woman opined that its consumption upon any extended scale might lead to harder drinking as a corrective, a result which she gravely deprecated. In her condemnation of the fashionable beverage she was zealously supported by Meston, who washed down his breakfast with large beakers of strong home-brewed ale, and who prophesied a decay of both men and morals if ever Scotsmen should deviate from the drinks of their ancestors. And Bess—Bess was there, too, fresh as a morning flower from which the sun has only just kissed off the dew-drops. Her plain home-spun gown, lightened up here and there with a bit of ribbon of gayer colour, showed off the native grace and dignity of her figure better than the more modish attire in which I had hitherto seen her. Here she was a queen among her own hills, and her innate high-breeding and superiority were acknow-

ledged by her surroundings—a shepherdess-queen, a princess in Arcady, whose crook was a much more patent symbol of her right to reign than her invisible crown. I will not affront her by describing her as a beauty. Place her in the *beau monde*, where the judgment of beauty rests upon as many arbitrary rules as the judging of race-horses at Newmarket, and peradventure she had been as completely overlooked as Pallas was in the judgment of Paris. The beauty which our connoisseurs swear by, which poets subscribe to, and painters are fain to heighten—what is it but skin-deep? Well, sometimes it is not even that. Here the face was but the outward and visible sign, unobscured by the powder and patches, the paints and cosmetics, of Chloe and Belinda, Phillis and Aminta, of an inward and spiritual grace, a grace full of loving and purity and truth, a grace invisible to the carnal eye that had been dimmed by gazing on the deities of fashion and false taste. Ancient philosophers—I forget which of them

—have somewhere laid it down that every soul, exiled from beholding the beauties of its native divinity, roams unsatisfied until its gaze recognises in some form the semblance of these perfections; and thus love is born. For my part I willingly accepted such a miraculous origin to so pure and high a passion —I who had believed myself to be in love half a score of times at least, and have run the whole gamut of Cupid's anthology in prose and verse at least twice a-year since I first went to Christ Church, without ever understanding what love portended.

But sentiment, with a huge venison pasty between you and its object, a talkative hostess on your right hand, and a companion across the table inclined to make a convivial beginning of the day, can only be maintained at a disadvantage, and with some probable odium to yourself. So I interested myself in Lady Balmoral's distresses about the turmoil caused by the coming war, the risk her husband would run, the unprotected condition in which

she and her daughter would be left, and the ruin that would befall them if King James's arms were not victorious.

"Some want ae thing and some another," quoth the dame. "Lord Mar, they say, wants to be a duke, and somebody else wants to be an earl or a knight; but Balmoral wants nothing and will get nothing, though I am sure he has had to borrow money on both sides to fit out his men, and grant a wadset over my portion of Auchlossan to Jonathan Mutch, the writer in Aberdeen. I doot sair if King James would ever redeem that, even if the laird ever daured to ask it at his hand."

"'No man goeth to war on his own charges,'" observed the Professor; "and Balmoral will have his claim with other loyal servants to a reimbursement for expenditure. There will be fat Whigs to fine and properties to cut up; and a fair slice out of some confiscated estate in the Lowlands will make a rich man of the laird."

"I hae nae skill in sic riches," said the lady,

shaking her head. "Our gain would be some puir body's loss, and it has been seen that a blessin' disna gang wi' sic conquests. I wish King George and King James could have cannily greed thegether, and divided the kingdom atween them, rig about, as ye may say."

"Hoots, Mrs Farquharson," cried the Professor, "think of King James's just rights, of our afflicted country groaning under the yoke of the usurper, of our distressed and persecuted Church. Surely a king *jure divino* and an Episcopal and Apostolic Church is worth the sacrifice of either life or lands."

"Aweel," responded the lady, "if I were the laird, I would just say, 'Be king wha likes, I'll be Balmoral;' and as for the Kirk, we could just make shift wi' it. Nae doot it is a wiser-like thing to hae bishops to see after matters, and the ministers are gey fond o' riding o'er the heads of their commissions, and maun hae their say in things that doesna preceesely concern them; but our ministers

here have been gey decent bodies, and have been content to live and let live."

"Wait until Balmoral comes back laden with *spolia opima* from the Whig borrowstowns," retorted Meston. "There are silks and stuffs enough in Dundee and St Johnstoun, to say nothing of pearlings and such gauds, to make fine ladies of you and my bonnie Bess here."

"In troth, I shall not object to wear them if they come my way, doctor," said the lady, frankly; "but I doot Balmoral has little taste for spulzie. If it had been his father, the Black Colonel, we would have had a better chance of braws."

"Ay, that was a man that would have been worth his weight in gold to King James's cause," said Meston, musingly. "He and Claver'se together. I drink to the memory of them both," he added, setting down an empty cup with a portentous sigh.

With many apologies for attending to her domestic duties, which were increased by her

having to arrange for provisioning the men who were to march with her husband until they crossed the Grampians, and could victual themselves at the expense of the Lowlanders, the lady rose to go. "And, indeed," said the thrifty dame, "I shanna cumber them, for they'll be a' the mair expeditious if they have toom stamachs to fill." Her daughter accompanied her, in spite of a delicate hint from me that I would like a walk about the castle; but she coyly pleaded that her mother could not spare her. I, in my turn, declined Meston's invitation to a stroll by the river-bank, although it was accompanied by another seductive offer to read me some portions of the Hudibrastic poem he was writing against the Scotch Presbyterians. I resolved to retire to my chamber, where I might write to my uncle a report of my mission, and wait for an opportunity of getting an interview with Bess.

And so I shut myself up, and put pen and paper before me, and sat down to write. And here was the beginning of my difficulties.

What report was I to send to my uncle and his friends? Was I to buoy them up with hopes of a successful rising, which might induce them to commit themselves, and probably land them in Newgate in the event of a failure. On the other hand, should I discourage them from trusting too much to this Scotch insurrection, and induce them by holding back to forfeit their chances of favour with King James. In such a case I would undoubtedly incur their resentment, and ruin all my own prospects under the new reign. Like all great diplomatists, I resolved to temporise. I wrote to Mr Thirlwall that a rising was certainly to take place, that the Earl of Mar was already arming, and that many other Scottish nobles were preparing to take the field within a few days. I had not yet seen sufficient of the country to judge how the population as a whole stood affected to King James; but in my opinion a large force of Highlandmen would be raised to make their way to the low country, and there join

the horsemen which would be gathered by the southern nobility and gentry. When the two joined, there would be a sufficient army to enter England; but how it would succeed there would depend entirely upon the temper of the English squires. I advised my uncle and his friends to regulate their proceedings by what they heard from the English shires. If the Earl of Derwentwater succeeded in maintaining himself in the north until the Highland army joined him, and if the Duke of Berwick made a successful descent upon the west, then they might declare for King James with a good assurance of success. But they ought to wait until they saw if the Highland army could make its way across the Border before committing themselves. I told him also that Lord Mar did not seem to stand in high estimation as a commander among his immediate associates, and that the general distrust of him might interfere with the success of the expedition. And I again reiterated, in conclusion, that they must shape their policy

by the posture of affairs in England more than by any rumours they might hear from Scotland. And having said so much, I laid down the pen with a clearer conscience.

At my open window, looking across the Dee and the hills beyond it, I sat and mused upon the circumstances of my life. Here was I, with no certain prospects before me, going to ask a young woman to marry me, who had, to all appearances, nothing more substantial to subsist upon than I had myself. She might be the heiress to this castle and these mountain lands, but of what use could these be to me? Much as I was disgusted with the world, my misanthropy was not yet so keen as to allow me to think of myself as the captain of a gang of bare-breeched Sawneys living upon my neighbour's cattle, with the only possible diversions of hunting and rebellion. If I wished to indulge a passion for romantic savagery, I would be better in the wilds of Surinam, which Mrs Behn hath so enchantingly described in her 'Royal Slave,' or on the main of America

among Dick Steele's Yaricoes. These were the true lands of romance; but who had ever thought of the Scottish Highlands except to supply a sneering jest for an epilogue to set the 'prentices a-clapping in the play-house? Was this a fit consummation for a man of taste and spirit, whose jokes at English booby squires and their wives had been applauded at the coffee-houses, and whispered round the circle at St James's? Zounds! I would be put in the prints, and Budgell or Ralph, or some other Whig blackguard, would write the "Last Dying Speech and Confession of a bare-legged Maccaroni," and have it hawked round Grub Street. And as for Bess, would even my own relations believe that my choice was dictated by the purest, the highest, the most exalted of motives, besides which the pleadings of common-sense shrank into insignificance? They would think of her as the Scotchwoman from whom Brother John Arbuthnot hath drawn the portrait of Sister Peg in 'John Bull': "Miss lodged in a garret, exposed to the north

wind, which shrivelled her countenance; however this usage, though it stunted the girl in her growth, gave her a hardy constitution; now and then she would seize upon John's commons, snatch a leg of a pullet or a bit of good beef, for which they were sure to go to fisticuffs. Miss would not yield in the least point, but even when Master had got her down, she would scratch and bite like a tiger." Well, this had always seemed to me to be a genuine portraiture of the Scotchwoman until I met with Bess. My mother came from too near the Tweed to have much love for the country across it, and her tales of the depredations of the Border thieves had been among the delights of my boyhood; and though her own ancestors had been lax in their views of property in cattle, yet their raids upon the Scottish side had always been presented to me as a commendable and righteous retaliation. From my mother I had to fear severe criticism, not improbably repugnance. And my father every year, in his great sermon on the Thirtieth of January, denounced

the Scots in a solemn commination as the race of Korah and Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, and every other ite in Holy Scripture that carried with it a sense of execration. And Sir Robert—well, I could imagine Sir Robert as the only person to whom my nuptials, if they ever came off, would give unqualified satisfaction. "Zounds! a lousy Scotchwoman! This is what the fellow has come to with his Frenchified finery, his poetry, and his haunting the side-boxes at plays, and crying *bough* and *boyta* after the wits, his city madams and suppers at the Rose, his diamond buckles—for which I paid — and Languedoc wines. A woundy Scotchwoman! Bring me a tankard of October, Joan, to wash her name out of my mouth! Odds body, Joan, they may say what they like o' thee, but thou'rt English inside and out—true English-bred, wench, and, d—n it, that is better than any trolloping northern drab o' 'em all can say. And my pipe, Joan, bid John butler haste it hither."

But, I then argued, a beautiful and virtuous

woman belongs to no race or nation. She derives her charm direct from nature, and this charm is expressed in a universal language, which only becomes less intelligible the more she bends her natural graces to the false blandishments of art. The *vis superba formæ* of my goddess was so one in its simplicity, so overawing in its purity, so unassailable in its power, that to conquer she had only but to come and be seen.

And to descend to more mundane consideration, in point of position and breeding Bess Farquharson was probably of as good rank in her own country as I was in mine. All these Highland chiefs, I had always understood, have pedigrees as long as their claymores—and nothing else. In point of worldly wealth we were very nearly equal, neither of us having anything in the present, and but uncertainties in prospect. This revolution would make or mar the both of us. If it failed, her father was ruined and forfeited, and I would have to fly the country, and there would be an end of

all love-making and marrriage. The whole future was so full of doubt, the shadows before us so thick, the ways so devious, that a turn either to the right or to the left seemed unimportant. In such a whirl were we, that there could be no discrimination between prudence and imprudence, so far as calculation could go; and so I would take the way most agreeable to myself. I would lay my love at Bess Farquharson's feet, if she would take it up.

That long autumn day, made longer by the deep solitude of the hills, whose peaks, like the marks on a dial, served to show the slow progress of the sun, seemed interminable. I strolled out, thinking I perchance might light upon Bess, but not daring to intrude myself upon those regions where the domestic affairs of the castle were being transacted. I wished to avoid Meston, whose prosing would have been unendurable to me in my strung frame of mind, and I kept specially clear of George of Coldrach, whom I saw moving about, and

who seemed not indisposed to confer the benefit of his society upon me, notwithstanding our difference of the previous evening, which he had probably forgotten; and so I sauntered down through the drooping birches towards the marge of the Dee, and there conned over the lesson which I meant to give Bess Farquharson in the art of love-making, when the time came.

And the time did come at the long last. When the sun was already resting on the rocky heights of Craignortie, and the dusky shadows were creeping up each valley and hill-face towards the dying light; when the Dee had begun to turn a dark mirror to the twilight, and its lightsome ripple of song had been changed to an evening lullaby; when the evening star, the only light in heaven, came out high up above Lochnagar; and Cairn-na-Cuimhne, the pile of remembrance, showed ghostly and grey across the dark water, as weird-like as if it had been built of the bones of dead warriors;—there, by the

side of the Dee, and with the murmur of its waters to accompany my pleading, the time came.

And now I suppose you would like to hear what I said and she responded,—to have a full recapitulation of my vows, protestations, and prayers—of her sighs, tears, and blushes? If I were writing a romance, such a recital would be justly due to the Benevolent Reader—could not indeed with any propriety be admitted; but in a true narrative like this present, I may frankly own that I cannot at this distance of time undertake to faithfully report what I said or what she said. No doubt there was an amount of very fine sentiment on my part, though through it all there ran a secret dread that she must think me talking very foolishly: that my advances were met with becoming and proper maiden coyness, goes also without saying. I am sensible that my descendants, for whom I write this record, may have just cause to complain of my reticence, for love-making was a Polite Art among the men of

Queen Anne's time; but they must just do as I did when need so serves them, and make the mouth the heart's interpreter. And though Mr Mason had stood by us to take down every syllable that passed between us in his famous shorthand, I do not believe that I could bring myself to here repeat the words. Love may be foolish, but it is holy also, and there is something sacramental in the interchange of pure vows between man and woman — a mystery not to be lightly revealed to the profane gaze. It is enough to say that there was but one mind between us—ay, and there were kisses too—under the shadow of the old birches on that calm evening by the banks of the Dee.

It was a night that must ever remain fixed on my memory. When we walked back to the castle we lingered outside, loath to go away from the soft silent night that had proved our friend and kept our secret. The wind sighed softly among the birch woods. Away on the heights, across the Dee, lights

were flitting about the clansmen's cottages. Over the hill there came a sound of the bagpipes, as a party of Highlanders came marching across from Strathdon to join the standard. Then the darkness became alive as the cottagers, with torches, turned out to see and greet the strangers, and the silence was broken with martial shouts and loud laughter, heard by us distinctly over the murmur of the Dee. Even in this region of romance the sight was picturesque, but it jarred on me as if it had introduced a note of discord into the harmony of our love.

"It is some of the Forbeses coming in from Strathdon to join the Earl," said Bess; "oh, this terrible war! My poor father, if anything should happen to him,—and you too!" and she hid her tears upon my shoulder.

And, to be sure, I kissed them away and comforted her.

CHAPTER XXI.

Some eight hundred years ago, Kenneth, a King of the Scots, was wont to sit on a rocky height and watch the chase as it wound along the upper waters of the Dee, until it was lost in the recesses of the glens that opened up all around him, or disappeared beyond the crests of the hills that on all sides girdle in the valley. Kenneth had long since slept with his fathers and the other monarchs who had hunted here after him; and the valley of Braemar had fallen asleep, so far as royalty was concerned, its echoes giving back but a faint answer to the horns of meaner huntsmen. A quiet had settled down upon the ancient royal forest that was not easily broken, and yet on this September evening, when we stood

outside Mar Castle, under the dark shadow of Craig Coinnich, where Kenneth had sat of yore, the animated scene before us rivalled the bustle and circumstance of a royal gathering. For to-morrow the Earl of Mar intended to solemnly unfurl the standard of King James, in the presence of a goodly gathering of nobles and chiefs, whose followers were preparing their bivouac in the meadows beneath us, or among the bushes of the hillside that towered up in front.

We, that is Meston and myself, had ridden up from Balmoral in the forenoon in obedience to a summons from the Earl, escorted by a party of Balmoral's men under the command of George of Coldrach. This inauspicious youth had been the one alloy in my bliss at Balmoral. I say nothing of his airs of patronage to myself, which were so absurd as to be beyond resentment; but the persistency with which he dogged the heels of Bess Farquharson inspired me with a longing to make of him a fitting example to all marplots. If by

any chance—and chances were lamentably few in these bustling days of preparation—I met Bess by herself in the hall, or in a passage of the castle, and seized her hand to stay her for five minutes of endearing talk, George of Coldrach would of certainty add a third to our company, and so make it none. Did I suggest to Bess of an evening that we should walk to the top of Craig-gowan and see the sun set, or that we should stroll along the river to the mouth of Glen Gelder, George of Coldrach was prompt to offer his escort, and would take no refusal. Worst of all, I could make no complaints. He was a relation, and evidently a privileged member of the house. He stood high in the good graces of our hostess, who allowed him, in my opinion, to carry the freedom of his intercourse with Bess beyond the limits which even near relationship rendered at all necessary. I could not unburden my dislike to the Professor, for the zeal with which the young man discharged his duty as Balmoral's lieutenant at table,

both by precept and example, had won the heart of that veteran toper, who prophesied for him a career of convivial glory rivalling that of Novellius Torquatus of Milan, who, as Plinius hath recorded in his 'Natural History,' was dubbed Eques Tricongius, or the Knight of the Three Gallons, for his exploits before the Emperor Tiberius. But to me the youth was most objectionable, all the more for the lofty airs of protection and attentiveness which he insisted on showing me.

In my chagrin I could not help complaining to Bess, suggesting that she ought to keep such a malapert young man at a greater distance.

"But he is my cousin," she argued, in astonishment, "and has been brought up much about the house. He has not got your manners or knowledge," with a proud look up to my face, which drew down a kiss, and dispelled all slumbering ill-feelings for the time being, "and he is too fond of the bottle and of quarrelling for so young a man. But if

you love me you will bear with him, and try to make him a more polite person. He will be your kinsman too."

Of course I swore on the spot that the training of George of Coldrach should be my special care, and in my anxiety to carry out Bess's slightest behests, I sought the youth, and endeavoured to improve his mind by a lecture on the political condition of the European kingdoms, and the relation of the restoration of the Stuarts to the Balance of Power on the Continent. But when he had heard me hardly half-way through, he stopped me with the Gaelic proverb, *Skeoch doch nan skial*—which meant, I was told, "stop your mouth with drink"—summed up the matter by adjudging the King of France to be the greatest monarch on earth, and the Highlanders the bravest and most martial nation; and that if these two laid their heads together they could easily impose their will upon the rest of the universe. And the upshot of my lesson was, that I was compelled to drink a bumper of

strong waters, though it was early in the day, and was dragged off to a clansman's cottage close by to see a match between two cocks, which transferred a gold Jacobus from my pocket to that of him of Coldrach, as the consequence of his challenge to me to back the weaker combatant.

That I did not commend myself as an exemplar to Master George I had soon audible proof, though involuntarily on my part.

"Pattern by him!" I overheard George say one evening in the courtyard, when dusk had fallen, while I was sitting on a stone bench just round the corner of the tower, drinking in the twilight. "Him a pattern for a man to copy, with a tongue as soft and sleek as a haberdasher's in the Broadgate of Aberdeen, and impudence enough to set up a tinkler from Tomintoul! And all his fine talk about Lady Mary, and Mrs Howard, and Mr Pope, and the Dean of St Patrick's, and the fine things he himself said in the coffee-houses, and how consumedly the wits all laughed."

All the time he was mimicking my English tones as closely as his barbarous northern brogue would admit of, and my heart grew chill at the idea that Bess was perchance laughing. "No, no, Mistress Bess, if I must have a model, a man for me, and not a tailor."

But relief came to my feelings.

"I hate you, George of Coldrach," cried Bess, in tones that expressed deep indignation. "Mr Bardolph is a better man than you any day; and if you had seen how grandly he flashed his sword when he saved me from the Mohocks, you would not dare to doubt his courage. And he fought a duel with Mr Burnett afterwards, and wounded him in the shoulder. I have no doubt he has fought many duels," she cried angrily, imparting to me a blood-guiltiness of which I was altogether sackless — "ay, and killed his man every time."

"I'll eat all that he has ever killed," cried the young man, with a laugh of derision.

"I'd send that bodkin-spit of his a-flying out of his hand with the first swing of my claymore. And I tell you, Bess Farquharson, if you are silly enough to cast sheep's eyes on this Sassenach, you will live to repent it. What do you think he will care for you when he gets back again among his Lady Marys and suchlike cattle?"

"You are a fool, George Farquharson!" was the indignant response. "What are you but an ignorant braeside boy, with the heather growing out between your toes, to speak thus of a gentleman like Mr Bardolph?" and I heard the whisk of her garments through the dusk as she wrathfully left George of Coldrach to his own meditations, to which he gave expression by whistling the Reel of Tullich. I extracted from Bess that George of Coldrach had been frequently talked off as a possible suitor for her hand. She was an heiress in a way, and it was naturally the general desire of the heads of the clan that the property should be kept within it by her wedding a

Farquharson. But Bess quite removed all cause for jealousy by vowing that though there were not another man on Deeside, she could not love George of Coldrach. He was her cousin, and had been her playmate from youth, and she could tolerate his passionate and arbitrary temper better than most others did; but she could never look upon him as a lover, far less receive him as a husband. He was a bold youth, and one of the best hunters in Braemar; and young though he was, he had behaved very gallantly in following up and fighting the caterans of Coll Macdonald of Keppoch, last time they had made a *creagh* on the country. All this had made his friends think so much of him, that George, in his turn, thought a great deal more of himself.

This I could well believe when, after some delicious days spent in Bess's society — of which I managed to get more than either the lady Balmoral or Coldrach approved — I started for Braemar under his convoy. The morning had been rainy and lowering, and the

mountain-tops were shrouded by thick wreaths of mist. But just as we were starting, and the lady and Bess were offering us the stirrup-cup for a "bonalley," as the Professor called it, the sun broke through the wreath of vapour, and the valley was transfigured from mourning to mirth. The Dee, which had been rushing along with a surly black surface on its waters, like a man hastening on to the commission of some dark and revengeful deed, now began to toss silvery wavelets to the sunshine, the dewy heather glistened like fields of rubies, the wind played upon the patches of yellow corn about Monaltrie and the slopes of Crathie, and the birches became vocal with the song of birds.

"See, the sun has burst forth!" cried the Professor; "*omen accipiamus, bonum atque faustum* — which means, Mrs Farquharson, that we are going to have luck in our expedition."

"God grant it," said the dame, piously; "but woe worth the wars, for many a pretty man goes out to them that never comes back.

But ye will be back again, Professor, before the Yearl marches, and you too, Mr Bardolph, for I'm judging that the Castletown will be throng, and mair men nor beds baith at the castle and Invercauld."

I assured my good hostess that whatever plans I might have to form, I would on no account leave Braemar without returning to Balmoral to thank her for her kind hospitality; and I threw so much warmth into my leave-taking that the lady was both surprised and affected. Only Bess, however, understood my meaning, as with flushed face and full eyes she received my adieux, while George of Coldrach impatiently gave the word to start.

We forded the Dee at the mouth of the Gelder, a small stream issuing from a narrow rugged glen, beyond which we could see the black sides of Lochnagar, round the tops of which heavy white wreaths of cloud were circling. At Inver we found that several thousand men were already mustered, and were to march to the Castletown on the

morrow for the raising of the standard. As both Coldrach and the Professor encountered many acquaintances among the leaders, a halt was called and hospitalities offered, from which my companions could not tear themselves away until the afternoon was far advanced; and when we did take horse again, Meston was in high poetical key, while Coldrach's martial spirit and lofty contempt for every one except himself were rapidly rising to the pitch of quarrelsomeness. As for me, I rode by myself, and feasted my eyes with the Highland scene.

We passed along a narrow valley, with rocky crags rising high above us on our right, and to our left the rugged moors and dells of the Ballochbuie, covered with long rank heather, and interspersed here and there with clumps of firs and birches, the degenerate remains of the great forests that covered the upper part of Braemar in the days of the painted Picts, according to Meston. Before us towered a huge mountain of grey rock, placed like a sen-

tinel to guard the approach to the upper end of the valley, and fording the Dee again, we passed under its base—Craig Cluny it is called —and passing on our right the castle of Invercauld, the chief of the clan Farquharson,—though Inverey, whom I had already met, was its actual leader,—we found ourselves entering the vale of Braemar, with its white castle before us on a little knoll, round which the Dee, here a small slowly flowing stream, circled on its north side.

The castle—a white square building, flanked at each angle by bartizaned towers, and surrounded by a loop-holed wall — had only recently been rebuilt since King William's troops had burned it after the Revolution to prevent the Farquharsons from making a strength of it. It was little more than a hunting chateau, and of little consequence for defence, even though it would scarcely have been possible to bring cannon into that country to assault it. Now, not merely the castle but the whole valley, it seemed, was crowded;

tents were pitched upon the sward, and rough shelters of pine-boughs and heather covered the level sward between it and the Dee. The Earl had returned that forenoon from an excursion across the hills to Strathdowne and Glenlivat, where he had proclaimed King James at Kirkmichael, and had brought back with him a large following of broken clans from Badenoch and Strathspey. In company with a number of chiefs, he had hunted down Glen Dee and scoured the glens of Cluny, Lui, and Quoich, bringing back many recruits and an ample supply of venison for his guests. Since his return the leaders had been sitting in council in the hall of the castle, and, from what we had been able to glean on our arrival, the assembly had presented a scene of confusion, discord, and divided opinions. I sent a messenger to announce my arrival to the Earl, and after we were relieved of our horses, we lingered in the courtyard waiting for an audience. There were many gentlemen around us who were known to Meston, and who

readily informed us of all that had been doing during the past few days. We were told that the Earl was meeting with difficulties in inducing many chiefs to join the expedition. They were willing enough to declare for King James, and hold out in his name in their mountain fastnesses, and to raid the Whig properties in the low countries; but they were disinclined to join in a regular campaign, which might carry them they knew not how far from their own country. Their insurrection, some argued, would draw a Hanoverian force inside the Highland line, where they would be able to meet it under the most favourable conditions; whereas, if they were led across the Forth into England, they would leave their lands and families at the mercy of the other clans, who would take part with the Elector, and seize the opportunity of paying off old scores. Many of the chiefs had made these representations to the Earl, but he had either threatened them with summary chastisement if they delayed giving in their open adherence

to King James, or had managed so that they stood too far committed in the eyes of their neighbours to draw back with either honour or safety.

While this talk was going on among us around the door of the castle, a man pushed forward and asked for speech of the Earl. There was something both in his dress and manner that singled him out for observation among the ordinary Highlandmen. Over a tattered petticoat of tartan he wore a cloak of undressed deer-skin, through slits in which his arms, bare from the shoulder, hung down. His legs and feet were bare, as was his head, covered with long thick matted hair; and in his hand he carried a light axe, which, with its ashen haft, three or four feet long, looked a sufficiently wicked weapon. His age did not appear to be more than two- or three-and-twenty, but on his face were graven deep lines, which might have been made by years of suffering or thought. His manner was stern and reserved; and when a gentleman told him that

Lord Mar would presently come forth, he silently went apart and took his stand in a corner of the courtyard, where, with his axe folded to his breast by his crossed arms, he remained looking thoughtfully down upon the earth, seemingly unconscious of the people around him, who, on their part, looked at him with a certain awe, apparently mingled with curiosity.

"It's Donal Dubh an-t-Ephiteach," explained a gentleman, who was afterwards presented to me as Gordon of Glenbucket, and of whom I had inquired whether the individual in question was Lord Mar's headsman. "He is *taishatr*—that is, he has got the second-sight—and has doubtless foreseen something about the fortune that awaits us, which he wishes to communicate to his lordship."

"You who are an Englishman, Mr Bardolph," put in Meston, "are probably ignorant of the gift possessed or claimed by many of our Highlanders of foreseeing the future. The seer sees in a vision or trance things which are

to come, sometimes soon, sometimes late, and as this faculty appears to be strengthened in critical times, his revelations carry with it great weight. I myself, though I have studied the subject, can give no philosophical explanations of the faculty; but well-authenticated exercises of it are notorious."

"Why, my friend," said I, "you do less than justice to our English gullibility. We can match you with eminent professors of that school, from Dr Dee down to Partridge the almanac-maker."

"Ah," said Meston, "we must learn to distinguish the wiles of juggling impostors,—now, as they were even in Cicero's day, *genus hominum infidum, sperantibus fallax*, ever cozeners and salt *in banco* to the vulgar flock of gulls,—from those persons who are made the involuntary means of revealing the secrets of destiny. Nature hath her own confidants, and why she chooses them, and how she instructs them, the wit of man cannot discover. Her method is as mysterious as are the decrees of

God. It is true that so many pretended sooth-sayers, augurs, aruspices, wizards, quacksalvers, medicasters, and fanatics have ever sought to delude the commons for the sake of filthy lucre, by pretending to powers of divination, that the philosopher *primâ facie* will refuse his credence to all supernatural claims until tested by proofs. But this second-sight—that is to be met with, so far as I wot, among no other tribes than the Erse peoples—is a portent *per se*. There is, I admit, the well-known and duly authenticated vision of St Ambrose, who, while in the body at Milan, was present in the spirit at St Martin's burial at Tours; but this I incline to regard as one of those manifestations of God's mercy to the apostles, fathers, and confessors of the Church, which we properly classify as miracles, and which are by no means to be confounded with such ecstatic trances or visions as those to which fanatics like the Cameronian Saunders Peden laid claim, or the vain legends related by Peter Walker the packman, of which, if there was

aught beyond imposition, the devil himself, the chief of all sectaries, was the *fons et origo.* There is also, as you will doubtless recollect, an instance in point in the speech of Theoclymenus to the wooers, in Homer his Odyssey, but this I take to be the outcome of a poetic imagination. But this exercise of the second-sight, as it hath never been practised for gain, nor to promote any private or public interest, is not to be accounted for by human devices, or the desire to dupe, but is rather to be set down as an inexplicable raising of a corner of the veil which Nature hangs over her arcana. The instances which have been witnessed and authenticated of the second-sight are so marvellous, that only to those who have actually witnessed them is belief possible ; yet so duly attested are many of these, that one is compelled to say with the learned Taurellus, *haec alii rident, sed vereor dum nolumus esse creduli, vitium non effugiamus in credulitas.* As for this man," added the Professor, dropping the didactic tone in which he was probably

wont to lecture his pupils for his ordinary voice, "I have never seen him before, and know not his powers."

"He is a man of mine," interposed Farquharson of Allancuaich, who was standing in the group that had been gathered round us by the Professor's prelection, "and young as he is, he is good *taishatr*. He has got Egyptian blood in him, and that makes him mair uncanny than ordinar. The Yearl is very naitrally anxious to ken if there be any foregoes of this expedition."

"Ay," said another, "but the cloud is ill to lift this time. They have tried the water-speiring. That is, they took the Ephiteach to the muckle pool on the Cluny below King Malcolm's auld castle, and that water, as dividing the Castletown from Auchindryne, was just the place for the purpose. It was mirk midnicht, and four men took the Ephiteach in their arms, and swung him o'er the water and dauded him against the bank, as has to be dune in sic cases. But though they summoned the good folk that are not to be

seen to come and answer their questions, the pool was never stirred, and not a word came out of it."

"Ay," said another, "it is like as if they were offended at something. The Ephiteach has been in the hills last night—ay, and in the kirkyard too—but neither vision nor ghost has been vouchsafed to him."

"The *Taisch* is growing weak," said an ancient. "In my days the Black Colonel would never lead a *spreach* upon the Lowlands but there was some forego of luck boded for him."

"It is the incoming of the Sassenach," put in a fourth; "that and the ministers. The *Taisch* goes out with the Gaelic."

"Have they tried the *taghairm?*" asked a portly middle-aged Highlander, whose tartans and plumed bonnet marked him as a Macdonald chief from Lochaber. "I have never known that to fail, even when the vision was most backward."

"The *taghairm* is not a thing to play with,"

said Allancuaich, shaking his head. "Evil hath come of it both to the seer and to them that sent him. The Ephiteach is very loath to undertake it, though my lord hath pressed him hard to it."

Here a warm discussion, sometimes drifting into Gaelic when it became very animated, ensued, regarding the virtues and dangers of the *taghairm;* and while Meston was busy explaining that the seer had to lie for a whole night in the hide of a newly slain bull in some haunted spot until the vision came over him, a movement took place behind us in the hall, and voices were heard calling, "Place for my lord, place for the Earl of Mar;" and Mar himself presently appeared, accompanied by the Earls of Marischal and Strathmore, Southesk and Panmure, the Lord Pitsligo, and other chiefs and gentlemen of less note.

Lord Mar turned aside to give me a warm greeting, and to excuse himself for not having received me earlier. He had had a considerable struggle to get affairs put into order, he

said, for even the smallest laird, who would only bring a score of men to the standard, thought himself entitled to dictate his terms to the king's lieutenant, and would only fight upon his own conditions. "But," said the Earl, "let me once get them into the field, and I shall show them who is master, and read them a lesson in martial law." Meanwhile, he assured me that everything was progressing most prosperously for the king's interest. The Earl of Derwentwater and Forster were actively arming on the English border; Kenmure and the Herrieses and Maxwells were already banded, and waiting the signal to rise; Edinburgh Castle was by this time probably in the hands of the Drummonds, who were to be secretly admitted by one of the garrison; he was expecting daily to hear that the king had started from Bar-le-Duc, and that the Duke of Berwick was preparing to embark a force for England. He trusted that I had written to my friends in London and pressed them to actively embark in the

cause; and it was with some compunction that I thought of the guarded way in which I had given my report, for assuming that all the Earl's prognostications came true, there seemed good hopes of King James's restoration. But yet in the background there were the soldiers of Marlborough's campaigns and a dogged nation of English Protestants to deal with—a prospect quite enough to qualify enthusiasm.

Here Allancuaich approached the Earl with a reverence, and said, "Donal Dubh, the Egyptian, is present, my lord. Your lordship had somewhat to say to him."

"True," replied Lord Mar; "let the man come forward. We are a superstitious race here in the Highlands, Mr Bardolph, and you will be amused by our childish plays. But, like a good maker of puppet-shows, I must consult the popular taste."

Donal Dubh followed Allancuaich up to the Earl, and bending his head, stood ready to be addressed. There seemed little of the vision-

ary in the fellow, a strong active-looking Gael, the muscles of whose bare arms and legs stood out like knotted whipcord; but there was a far-away look in the man's face, and his eyes, which he seldom raised, had a deep unfathomable expression in them.

"And what hast thou to say?" demanded the Earl, as he loftily surveyed the man from head to foot.

"Nothing," was the rejoinder, which seemed to be drawn from the speaker as if by force.

"Nothing — and that is soon told. And yet they call you *taishatr!*" said the Earl, with a sneer.

"*They* make me *taishatr,*" returned the man, gloomily.

"*They,* indeed! I am inclined to think thou art a juggling knave. But beware how you play tricks with me. Did you watch last night?"

"I watched last night."

"Where?"

"In the Black Sluggan of Candlich."

"And you saw nothing? And a likely place, too. What think you, gentlemen?" said Lord Mar, addressing some of the Highlandmen who stood by him. "Is it not unusual that there should be so much difficulty about the *Taisch* at a time like this? It will foretell a tinkler's wedding or a gaberlunzie's burial, and yet we cannot get the smallest light upon the fortunes of his Majesty's arms."

"Man cannot control the vision," said an old Highlander, who seemed shocked at the Earl's speech. "No one knows whence it comes, or whither it goes, and it reveals only what is appointed. But if your lordship is minded to try the *taghairm*, no power in air or in middle earth has ever been known to resist that."

"No, no; not the *taghairm*," cried the Ephiteach, in a voice of intense anguish, as a look of pain convulsed his features. "I will watch again in the Sluggan; I will seek the churchyard at the midnight hour,—but not that."

"The *taghairm* be it, then," said the Earl, without the slightest regard to the evident agony of his vassal. "I think a bull's hide is a part of the rite. See that one is slaughtered, Allancuaich, and that all the ceremonies are duly observed. So, back with you to-night to the Black Sluggan of Candlich, and watch duly in *taghairm* for the vision. And hear me, you Egyptian scoundrel," added the Earl, going up to the Ephiteach and speaking in a low voice, "bring me back good omens of success, that will put heart into the men, or, by the God above us! I shall hang you from the highest tree on Craig Coinnich. And heark ye, Cattenach," he called to the Highlander I had seen and marked at Aboyne, "keep your eye on the fellow, and see that he goes on his errand in proper guise."

Donal Dubh stood motionless, as if he heard him not, his eyes fixed upon vacancy, and it was only when Cattenach advanced to lead him away that he was roused from his stupor. With a start he turned round upon the Earl

with a look of fury, and seemed as if he would spring upon him, when Cattenach, saying some words to him in Gaelic, forcibly dragged him from the spot.

Lord Mar took me by the arm and led me outside the courtyard, and we paced together slowly up and down in the dying light. "What a jest our friend Bolingbroke could make of the Ephiteach, with his second-sight and his bull's hide, taking the auspices of our expedition!" said he, suddenly pausing, and bursting out into a harsh laugh. "A clever Whig might make use of it to laugh our army off the ground, just as Wharton used to boast in his cups that he had whistled King James out of the country with his 'Lilliebulero.' But the vulgar mind has always had the same desire to peer into the future, and I daresay the Roman generals laughed heartily in their own sleeves when they set the augurs to consult the gods regarding their fortunes."

I ventured to interpose that good authority

had declared the laugh to be on the side of the augurs.

"True, and I shall take care that our augur at least shall laugh us good luck, an he would keep his craig and the withy well apart."

"You lay no stress on this mode of divination, then, my lord; and yet my friend Meston, who is a learned man, seems to regard it as true."

"A learned man, as you say—a very learned man, with all his peculiarities. You are a man of the world, Mr Bardolph, but have you ever seen learning an obstacle to gross superstition? Nay, rather, doth it not provide a man with plausible reasons and deep arguments for cherishing his delusions? but the statesman, the man of affairs, cannot afford the luxury of self-deception, though he will very properly turn the credulity of others to serve his own ends."

"But, as I understand, there are many instances in which the predictions of the second-sight have actually been fulfilled."

"Hum—perhaps; perchance by coincidence, perchance by shrewd calculation on the part of the seer, as the Ephiteach, to save his neck, will prophesy the success which will assuredly follow our efforts. With my confidence in the justness of our cause, and that the Almighty will prosper those who have the right divine to rule, I want no other omens of victory."

The sentiment was lofty, but coming from the Earl it grated upon my ear, and I thought in my own mind that his lordship's calculations must have had a more mundane foundation before he took the resolution to embark upon such an undertaking.

"And now we have the banquet to get through before we can call a day that has been most toilsome to me at an end. I must crave your indulgence for my guests, who are scarcely a whit more civilised than their own followers, and will feast and carouse till cock-crow, or as long as the liquor lasts. Oh for a quiet little repast with St John, Mat Prior,

Gay perhaps, and yourself, with Tom Brown thrown in to be our jester, at the Rose or the Devil, by Temple Bar, with a few bottles of old wine, and plenty of Attic salt to season our repast! That, to my simple tastes, were fitter than the rude rere-suppers and pottle-deep drinking which delight our Scottish lords and gentry, who can find no more entertaining themes to talk of than their own exploits and high descent; but what cannot be cured must be endured."

The night had by this time fallen upon the valley, and the gloom was heightened by the shadow of the hills. But of a sudden the scene became lightened up by the innumerable watch-fires by which the Highlanders were cooking their evening meal. Through the darkness the flames flickered upon dusky figures, who seemed like giants in the firelight, moving to and fro, and flashed on piled arms and pieces of mail. In several of the encampments the notes of the bagpipes were heard; and as no two pipes were playing the same

tune, the medley had a wild and savage resemblance to the music of the winds in a hurricane. Away to the right, in the hamlet of Auchindryne, a blaze of fire showed a forge at work and smiths busy with the preparation of arms, the clang of their hammers giving a metallic accompaniment to the wind music. A blaze of flame suddenly sprung up on Craig Coinnich, high up in the air above our heads as it seemed, like some baleful portent on the heavens. With incredible rapidity another shone out from Morrone, a dark hill on the west; and even while we stood there, every peak around showed a flaming summit.

"Ay," said Lord Mar, looking round at the beacons, "a few minutes will spread the news from the Tap o' Noth and the Buck of the Cabrach to the shores of Forth and the Lothians that King James reigns in Mar at least, and that to-morrow will see his standard unfurled to the winds of victory. The Thames at London, Mr Bardolph, will give back the reflection of that blaze."

CHAPTER XXII.

Methinks Saturn and the Moon must have met in Scorpio that sixth day of September seventeen hundred and fifteen, as they did on that famous night when Catiline's conspiracy was fully hatched. Our Catiline was early astir that memorable morning; and not merely the castle, but the whole of Braemar were astir with him. The prolonged banquet had provided bed as well as board for many of the guests, who, either perforce or because there was no choice of better quarters, had slept on the scene of the revels. I had been happy, through Balmoral's care of me, in finding a shake-down in the corner of a room, where Meston and half-a-dozen other gentle-

men were provided with similar accommodation. Any desire to sleep was, however, effectually dispelled by my chamber-fellows, one of whom, an ancient gentleman of the Gordons, insisted on relating the whole of his campaign under General Buchan after Dundee's death, until their little force was finally broken at the Haughs of Cromdale by Sir Thomas Livingstone's troops. Meston, who came in last of all from the feast, carrying with him a couple of bottles, proposed we should make a night of it; but the satiety or fatigues of our companions frowned down the motion. None abashed, the Professor proposed to sing a new song which he himself had made for the *Collegium Butterense*, a seat of learning founded upon a convivial basis in the brave town of Bon Accord; and he had actually begun to chant—

"'Gainst any man of sense,
Asserimus ex pacto,
Upon his own expense,
Quod vere datur ens,
Potabile de facto.

The longer we do sit,
The more we hate all quarrels.
Let none his quarters flit
The more we do admit
Of vacuum in barrels."

"Py Cot! but if you do not hold your tongues, I shall be making you sing Lochiel's ballats and Macleod's psalms," cried a Celt, sitting up from the bed on which he had thrown himself full-dressed. He held a dangerous-looking dirk in his hand. "We did not march all the way from Lairig-ru this day to be kept awake by your skirling."

The philosopher in wrath hurled the epithets "beast," "Bœotian," at his antagonist, and seemed as if he would brain him with his bottle; but the others authoritatively interposed, and peace was restored.

"Never mind him," said Gordon, who, as I afterwards learned, was the laird of Avochie, and the Duke of Gordon's bailie of Strathbogie, "the Professor's fou; but there's nae harm in him."

"Fou!" echoed the Professor, who, finding

that his legs refused to sustain him, sank back on his shake-down. "And what for should I not be fou if I have a mind to? *Narratur et prisci Catonis sæpe mero caluisse virtus.* But *cras iterabimus*—I'll have satisfaction for this to-morrow.

> "*Post sextam semi-hora,*
> At night no man refuses
> To come *lavore ora,*
> *Est melior quam Aurora,*
> And fitter for the Muses."

But the good liquor could carry him no further, and Meston fell back on his pallet into a profound slumber.

The Lairig-ru man, who had never taken his eye off the Professor or his hand from the dirk, here rose and crossed over to the sleeper. I started to defend him, but Gordon caught hold of my hand with a reassuring smile. The Fraser relieved the philosopher's unresisting hand of the bottle which it had continued to grasp, took up the other, and went quietly back to his bed. Having handed one to his next neighbour, he took a long pull at the

second, crossed himself, muttered a brief prayer, and soon was making more noise by his snoring than the erring Professor had made by his music.

It was not wonderful that I was glad to hail daylight after a night thus spent, and to hear the warning notes of the bagpipes as they roused the castle and the surrounding glens from slumber. My companions went forth to look after their followers. Meston, who had forgotten his quarrel of the previous night, but who confessed to a feeling of thirst, went in quest of his morning, and Lord Mar's English servant came to wait upon myself and beg me to breakfast with his master in his private apartment.

"This is but poor accommodation for gentlemen, sir," said the man, shrugging his shoulders as he looked round our sleeping chamber. "A City 'prentice would turn up his nose at such a truckle."

"I suppose many of us have had worse shifts, my friend. How did you fare yourself?"

"Very badly, sir. I thought myself lucky to be let sleep within sight of the kitchen fire, for the nights are cold in this woundy outlandish Scotch country."

"I am afraid you will have worse fare before you," I said, "if you are to march with your master."

"I suppose so," said the man, with a sigh; "but I daresay we shall soon be back in London, where men wear small-clothes and sleep among blankets."

"And how if we are beaten?" said I, wishing to play with the man.

"Oh, as for that," said he, with a grimace, "let my lord alone; he can turn cat in pan with any man in England."

On all hands doubts of the Earl's honesty: and when I met him again he pressed me to send another letter to London, informing my friends of the success of the insurrection. He showed me his muster lists; read me letters from all the great Highland chiefs, who had promised to join the standard; from the

nobility, who were only waiting the signal to take the field with their followers; from magistrates in the chief Scottish towns, who were ready to assist with money and victuals. To hear him was to feel that all Scotland was in the hands of King James already. But what of the opposition? Surely he did not expect that the Elector was to resign the Crown of Scotland without striking a blow for it? or that the stubborn Scotch Whigs, who had proved such a thorn in the side of the house of Stuart, would resign themselves in dogged silence to its restoration? The Earl loftily scouted the idea of any serious resistance. Argyll, the commander-in-chief, had not left St James's by the latest accounts, and when he came he would find his own castle of Inverary in the hands of King James's men. General Wightman at Stirling had barely a couple of thousand horse and foot, and even with the aid of Whig volunteers would not be able to bring five thousand men to the field; while King James's forces would be at least

fifteen thousand strong before the Elector's troops could come within touch of them. To doubt success with such odds and with such a cause was unpardonable infidelity, and Lord Mar was sure that I would be able to impress upon my friends that now was the time to evince their loyalty, by sending money, arms, and munitions to the king's service.

It was hard not to be overcome by the Earl's specious arguments, harder still to escape the enthusiasm inspiring the multitude which swarmed around the castle out of doors. As far as the eye could see, the hill-tops, the hill-sides, the roads, and the river-banks were alive with people—some come to join the expedition, others to see the ceremony of proclaiming King James. From every access to the valley bodies of Highlandmen were seen advancing, with banners displayed and bagpipes screaming their loudest, towards the Castletown; while here and there a small body of horse, each with its own flag and trumpet, which strove to make itself heard above the shriller

noise of the pipes, rode in. Around the castle itself the different encampments were being put in order. Officers or chiefs were inspecting and dressing their men; others were busied in teaching their followers a rude kind of drill. Some engaged in mimic fights, and sword and target play was in general practice. A party of the Macdonalds of Keppoch, under that chief himself—who had come in the evening before, and against whom complaints had already been laid before the Earl of having plundered the country all along his line of march—were drawn up on the meadow to the right of the castle. All at once, at a signal from their chief, and with a fierce flourish on the bagpipes, they dashed forward, sword and targe, in a wild rush to the foot of Craig Coinnich. There they stopped an instant, threw their arms on the ground, and began to run up the hill, all steep and precipitous as it was, with incredible rapidity, amid the shouts of the assembled Highlanders, who paused to look on at the spectacle. It was a killing pace, and

many soon began to give in, and throw themselves panting down on the heather; but the great majority of them still maintained the race. In less than six minutes from their starting from the foot, one young man, who had topped the others by some yards, after a desperate dash, stood on the summit, waving his arms and plumed bonnet in answer to the shouts from below which acclaimed his victory; and immediately he was joined by a score or so of his fellows, who, shouting and yelling in Gaelic, raised him on their shoulders and danced with him in their midst around the hill-top, while a piper—who, despite his cumbrous instrument, had been among the first to reach the summit—burst forth with the inspiriting piobrach of the Macdonalds, while a contagious enthusiasm at the exploit spread over all the crowds below. It is curious that from this remarkable scene my thoughts as I stood there turned persistently to London. What would Ministers at St James's—what the good citizens east of Temple

Bar, the loungers at the coffee-houses, the guardsmen at the taverns, or the groom-porter's —think of such a scene? Yet the business which we were here transacting in this secluded corner of the Grampian mountains might bring its issues home to them all. Every ache in the body of broad Britain causes a corresponding throb in the temple of London; and here was what must speedily compel her to lay her finger upon the itching part. I smiled bitterly as I thought of these wild Macdonalds swarming, sword in hand, along Cheap, and gutting Ludgate from garret to cellar. But would it ever come to that? The Ministers were poor enough creatures, who looked upon King George as merely a prop to the Whig dukedoms, and would run as little risk as they individually could. Marlborough was growing old, and there was scarcely a commander of any military capacity who had not been driven into retirement and disgust. But there was Walpole, who carried in his single head all the statesmanship of the Government. He could

bring resources out of his fertile mind to fight against us which might be more dangerous than the armed opposition. Perhaps the greatest blunder of the ever-recurring mistakes made by King James and his advisers was that they did not buy Walpole. It could have been done if the price had been high enough and the surety for payment sufficient, even though the rogue had a relish for popular liberty.

But from London to Braemar is "a far cry to Lochowe," as the Campbells say, and probably there were few who recked much of what the metropolis might think of our proceedings that day. At noon we all assembled at Auchindryne, a little hamlet standing high above the banks of the Cluny, a rapid-rushing stream which joins the Dee a little above the castle. Here, in front of a low thatched building with a wall round it where the Earl or his deputies dispensed the feudal justice of the district, we heard his lordship read out his commission as Lieutenant-General, and then

proclaim James the Seventh, by the grace of God, King of Scotland, England, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith; while the shouts of "God save King James!" accompanied by the blare of trumpets and the loud notes of the bagpipes, startled the eagles from their eyries in Lochnagar and Benavon, and raised the deer in the deepest dells of Glen Dee and Glen Lui. Every sword was flashed in the sunshine, every banner and pennon of the chiefs and lords present was tossed to the wind; while high above the rest, over the Earl's head, Invercauld waved the royal standard of Scotland, with its red lion rampant, which his ancestor had lost his life in carrying at the battle of Pinkie. It was a moment of maddening enthusiasm. Again and again the cry of "God save King James!" was taken up and shouted until the hills and glens echoed it back, and again the swords were madly waved in the air, and the pipers blew a still louder blast. Even I, cold-blooded and unimpulsive Saxon as I am, was carried off by a fierce desire for

instant fighting—though I blushed the very next moment at what the most casual coffee-house acquaintance might say if he saw me thus leaping and whooping in the midst of a mob of unbreeched savages. But as the poet Euripides saith, there are cases where it is best not to be too wise.

We had still another formality to go through. King James's standard was to be raised as the signal for war, and this was to be done at the other side of the Cluny. An effort was made to form an order of march; but the frantic enthusiasm of the clansmen would brook no restraint from their chiefs, who, perhaps unwilling or unable to temper the ardour of their men, left them to themselves. With a swift rush the Highlanders dashed across the rocky bed of the Cluny, disdaining to seek the ford, scrambled up the rugged bank opposite, and began to form a ring round a little knoll on the top of which an earthen mound had been raised, with a tall flagstaff in the middle surmounted by a gilded ball. Lord Mar, escorted

by the horsemen, and with trumpeters and the royal standard, rode by a roundabout way across the stream, and took up a position in front of the knoll facing the clansmen, whom their chiefs now endeavoured to form into something like orderly ranks. With the Earl was the Marquis of Huntly, the Earl Marischal, the Earls of Strathmore, Southesk, and Panmure, Lord Ogilvie, and a number of mounted gentry from the Braes of Angus, while Lord Pitsligo, who had brought with him a small troop of well-mounted horse, kept an open space round about the knoll and Lord Mar's circle. To the right were a considerable force of Macdonalds under Coll of Keppoch, with detachments of the Camerons, Macphersons, Macintoshes, and other clans from Badenoch and Lochaber. In the middle was the Earl of Mar's own contingent of Farquharsons, under Peter of Inverey, a numerous and sturdy-looking body of men, with their red and green tartans. A little distance from these, under their own leaders, were small bodies of the

Earl's vassals who did not serve under the Farquharson banner—Mackenzie of Dalmore, and his vassals, the Fir Macdonalds, and men from Cromar and Glengairn. A small body of men, tired and dusty-looking, who had just come upon the scene, endeavoured to press their way forward to the front of the Farquharsons' left. They were clad in a dark dull-coloured tartan, and seemed to regard the Lieutenant-General with looks of uneasiness.

"Are these my Strathdon and Kildrummie vassals—all of them?" he asked in a low tone of Balmoral, who was standing close to his rein.

"Not all of them, my lord,—the Farquharsons from Strathdon and Corgarff came in a few nights ago, and are mustered under Inverey."

"And is Inverernan not with them?" demanded the Earl, with a black scowl.

"He is not, my lord."

"God confound the villain!" muttered the Earl in a transport of fury, all the more fierce that he did his best to suppress it. "His neck

shall stretch for this. Though he is my vassal, his heart is with his own Whig chief, the Lord Forbes. I shall have his house burned above his head before four-and-twenty hours are over. Here, Cattenach," he called out aloud to the tall young Highlander of the Balloch-buie who had braved him at Aboyne, and whom I had noticed since to be in close attendance upon the Earl; "take command of these Strathdon men, and come to me for orders after the muster is dismissed."

The position on the left was occupied by the clan Gordon, a strong body, partly Highland and partly Lowland, including a considerable body of mounted retainers, a number of wild-looking vassals, broken clansmen from Glenlivat and Badenoch, who owned the Duke of Gordon as their master, and whose only common badge was the sprig of ivy which they wore in their caps. And flanking all was the horsemen from the Mearns, who had come in with the Earl Marischal, and from Buchan in Aberdeenshire — among which I

noticed Meston's *quondam* antagonist, the laird of Dockinloan, who, with five or six loutish-looking peasants, mounted upon as many sorry jades, was prancing about with his drawn sword, making as much fuss as a brigadier of horse, until he was sternly ordered by Lord Pitsligo to fall back and be silent. There was a brief pause while Lord Mar sat in his saddle and surveyed his army. The day was now advancing, and the sun-rays fell aslant Glen Cluny, when they were not concealed by the light clouds which the wind in gusts whirled about the hill-tops. The weather was inclined to be stormy, and black clouds were rising behind Morrone, and the haughs between the Dee and the hills were alternately green and gold, as sunlight chased shadow across them. Lord Mar looked fixedly upwards—perhaps he was looking at the weather, perhaps he was putting up a prayer for success, perhaps he was seeking for a sign; but after a minute's abstraction, he pulled his horse sharply in until the animal curveted,

and gave a brief order that the Standard should be uncased. His attendants brought forward the precious case, and the Earl Marischal, his brother James Keith, Lord Ogilvie, and Gordon of Glenbucket sprang from their horses, and hastened to attach it to the silken cords of the flagstaff. Proudly the blue silken banner rose aloft, and shook out its folds in the wind, showing the arms of Scotland on one side bright with golden embroidery, and its legend, "Nemo me impune lacessit," and on the other the crowned thistle; while from its ends streamed white silken pendants, with scrolls of "For our King and Oppressed Country," and "For our Lives and Liberties," finely embroidered on them in gold. It was a standard worthy of a king's cause, and of the fair hands of the Countess Frances, who had wrought it.

The standard fluttered and swelled for a moment on the wind, the streamers flying out at their full length, while the assembly, with proud and admiring gaze, stood waiting for

the word to burst forth into rapturous applause. The Earl took off his hat and formally saluted the royal ensign ; his hand was raised to lead a shout of cheering, when the gilded ball fixed upon the point of the spear-headed flagstaff toppled over, and rolled down the mound. A visible shudder ran through the whole concourse, and men who would have faced death without a muscle being unnerved shivered at such a portent. Standing beside Lord Mar, I could hear a stifled oath burst from his lips, and he sat gazing on the flagstaff, a rigid picture of abject terror. Such a panic had seized on all, that had half-a-dozen of King George's troopers then appeared on the scene, they would have sent the whole force flying in confusion. But it was only for an instant. The Earl Marischal had bounded forward, caught up the ball, and beckoning to him a nimble Highlander, made the man climb up the pole and restore it to its former position. Then with a swift glance at Lord Mar, whose faculties still seemed paralysed, the

Marischal drew his sword, and, with his left arm round the standard, waved it above his head, shouting, "Long live King James! God save King James!" so lustily, that the assembly, starting from its stupor, took up the cry, and as if ashamed of a passing weakness, strove to give it a hearty echo. Again and again the Marischal raised a cheer, the trumpets were bid to sound, the bagpipes wakened up, and a forced and feverish display of loyal enthusiasm broke out, as if to banish all recollection of the ominous incident.

Then Lord Mar managed to speak a few words to his array. Now that their rightful and lawful king had appointed his standard to be set up among these mountains, and committed it to the charge of his faithful Highlandmen, there was to be no turning back, no sheathing of the sword, until it waved from the towers of Windsor as freely as it now floated on the Braes of Mar. They had right on their side; their cause was that of Freedom and Religion; the wrongs of Glencoe and

Darien had to be avenged, and they might commit the issue with hopeful hearts to the God of battles. The wind, he added — in feeble effort to remove the bad impression which had been caused by the misadventure— the wind that had blown the top from the flagstaff was fair set for Hanover, and if it held good for a week or two longer, would waft the Elector back to his Herrenhausen, where, he hoped, he might live henceforth in comfort and happiness with his cabbages and mistresses, and never more trouble a nation who would bear no rule but that of their native rightful kings.

The Earl then broke up the gathering by ordering the men back to their quarters, where an ample supply of good liquor would be provided for them to drink King James's health, and inviting the leaders to attend him at the castle, turned to ride off the ground. But before he could stir from the spot, a new element of excitement was added to the events of the day.

CHAPTER XXIII.

All eyes were intently looking down the valley, up which a man came running at headlong speed, gesticulating wildly with his arms, while his long bare hair streamed in the wind behind him. In one hand he carried a battle-axe, which he waved wildly round his head in signal to the crowd; and all who had ever seen him recognised in the runner Donal Dubh, the Egyptian.

"The Ephiteach! the Ephiteach!" was on every tongue; and men, remembering the portent we had already witnessed, looked each uneasily at his neighbour, as if dreading some further augury of evil from the new arrival.

Lord Mar hesitated for a minute, as if in doubt whether to stop or ride on, and then

reined back his horse and waited. "Let us hear what he has to say," he muttered; "if aught of good, it may undo the chance of that unlucky ball; if evil, I shall hang the gipsy dog before the words are cold in his mouth."

Meanwhile a ready passage had been made through the ranks, all drawing back in awe, and none daring to question a man with the power of the *Taisch* still fresh upon him, until at length the Ephiteach stood panting before the Earl. He made no reverence, but drew himself up to his full height, and stood with his arms folded across his heaving breast, his eyes glaring steadily at Lord Mar, while his countenance was deadly pale, and distorted with violent emotion.

The Earl looked at the man, up and down, half in dread, as it seemed to me, half in scorn, while most of the leaders, especially the chiefs, pressed round about in eager curiosity.

"Well, Ephiteach," asked the Earl at length, after he had kept silence for a space to see if the man would speak of himself—"hast seen

a vision? Has the *Taisch* been strong upon you?"

"The *Taisch* has been strong upon me," said the man, slowly; "I have seen strange things, which I do not understand, and which I have not words to tell."

"Out with them then," cried the Earl, "in such speech as you have. But if——"

"Hear me, then, proud lord, and ye men of Mar," cried the Ephiteach, interrupting the menace, and he spoke as if inspired by the sacred fury of an ancient pagan oracle—"hear me while I speak of the sights which I have seen, of things that have to be, of visions that must be fulfilled. I speak in the spirit of those who cannot lie. I tell what has been shown me by those who are not permitted to deceive. Hearken!

"I lay in the Black Sluggan of Candlich, in the *taghairm*, as yon haughty lord commanded me to do, though sore against my will, for fierce and bitter are the struggles that the spirit has to undergo before those

who are reluctant can be forced to reveal what they would fain conceal. It is an eerie and dreadful spot to lie in at mirk midnight, with all the powers of evil crowding around. The *daoine schie* gathered in the glen and threatened me for disturbing their haunts. The kelpie muttered menaces in the pool beneath. The Cailleach Bheathrach came through the air from Glengairn and menaced me with her thunderbolts. Dim ghosts glided past on the gale, pointing a warning finger at me. Spirits from the nethermost hell hovered round me, seeking to drag me from the protection of the bull's hide, where I lay trembling and waiting for the *Taisch*."

"Get on, then, get on!" quoth the Earl, impatiently.

"At length the vision came heavily upon me," continued the Ephiteach, with a look of scorn at the Earl's interruption. "A thick darkness settled down on my soul, dark as the blackest thunder-cloud that rests on the summit of Lochnagar. It compressed me

round and round, and crushed me with its thickness and weight. I could not move a limb, I could not draw a breath, the world whirled round with me, and I was no longer Donal Dubh, but a part of the darkness."

As the seer paused for breath, a silence that was almost oppressive was maintained, and the noise of even a horse champing at his bit, or the rattle of a sword-hilt, as its owner pressed closer to hear, made men start nervously.

"Then as the darkness rolled off my eyelids, I could see in my spirit. I could see a great Queen, sitting here in the midst of our Marland, gladdening the hearts of the clansmen, who crowded around her in joy and pride. And by her was a great Prince—a true noble king, though crownless, who guided her thither. Fleeter than the swiftest horses were the chariots that brought her here, and they moved of their own power amid fire and smoke. She, the greatest and the wisest Queen that has ever ruled over broad Albyn since Margaret of the Black Rood, was a queen of our own, of the

race of Fergus and Malcolm, of the blood of the Bruce and the Stuart. Fair stood her lofty castle on the bank of Dee, and thither I saw the greatest nobles of Scotland and England coming and going at her bidding. She spoke, and faster than lightning her words flashed from the bank of the Dee to the ends of the earth, where her subjects heard them and obeyed. You may ask me how this could be, Maormor of Mar, and I cannot tell you; but I saw it, and it shall be. I saw many great and fair kingdoms prospering under her smile, peace and plenty in the land, equal justice dealt out to rich and poor, no more oppression, no more rapine. The love of her people followed her about, and the gracious words were ever in her mouth. And I saw more—I saw what if I might tell you—what I would tell you and all here if I dared; but—but woe is me—I warn——" here the Ephiteach's frame became convulsed, as if he were torn by some powerful internal emotion; he gazed dazedly around him, swayed from

side to side, and finally fell senseless to the ground.

"Excellent," said Lord Mar to me in an undertone; "Betterton himself never surpassed that. See that the man is cared for. I suppose," he said, turning round and specially speaking to the Highlanders around him, "we may look upon this as a prediction of sure success, though obscure as the utterances of the *Taisch* always are. See that the clansmen are all told that the second-sight has foreseen a triumph for us. And now, my lords and gentlemen, let us return to the castle."

We were a thoughtful company as we rode down the valley. The air was full of the omens that we had seen and heard, and each had his own thoughts of them, and his own views of what they might portend. The ardent and imaginative nature of the Highlanders, easily swayed by superstitious feelings, had been excited to a feverish point by the supreme ordeal of the *taghairm*, and received the dreams of the Ephiteach as a direct revela-

tion of the future, although so dark as to leave its meaning doubtful. The Lowlanders, on the other hand, though affecting to ridicule the Ephiteach's disclosure among themselves, and treating the whole matter as a useful concession to Highland credulity, were not so unimpressed as they strove to appear. I never yet met with any man so thoroughly sceptical that he was not at times a prey to superstitious emotions, and I have always found a free-thinker to be more afraid in the dark than an honest Christian. I have seen Bolingbroke shiver when his neighbour at table upset a salt-cellar on a Sunday, and I knew one atheist who chattered paternosters, and crossed himself like a Jesuit priest, when there was talk of a ghost in the gallery at Newstead, where he had gone with me on a visit.

"What think ye of the auspices, *mi magister?*" said the Earl Marischal, backing his horse through the cavalcade to join Meston, where we were riding alongside each other. "You will be able to give your students a

lecture on the second-sight when next you meet them in the old College."

"Ah, my students," returned the philosopher, gloomily. "I seem far enough away from them now, and I doubt if any prelections of mine will ever set the Marischal College again by the ears. They who take the sword perish by the sword—there's Holy Writ for that, and Black and Gregory may say their say in the auld pædagogy for all the laugh that Willie Meston will ever raise against them again."

"What, *magister, à la mort*, and at the beginning of the campaign," said the Earl, looking at him curiously; "and may I ask what has thus cast down your spirit—was it the fall of the standard-ball or the predictions of that ragged gipsy loon?—surely the most extraordinary prophet that ever thrust himself into an assemblage of nobles since the shepherd of Tekoa burst into Jeroboam's banquet at Bethel. These things might damp the courage of a Highland chieftain or a half-lettered Lowlander like myself, but a learned philoso-

pher like you, *mi magister*—why, I halted to have out my laugh with you over the play, and at the way in which the faces of that lantern-jawed Coll of Keppoch and his Highland compeers lengthened out as long as their pedigrees when one warning fell hard on the heels of the other. I must admit it was an unlucky puff of wind that blew down that ball."

"As for that," returned the Professor, gravely, "the Almighty holds the wind in the hollow of His hand, but——"

"I wish He had kept it closed, then, at that particular moment," interrupted the profane Marischal. "It is said, is it not, that when King Charles's standard was set up at Nottingham before the great civil war, it too was blown down, and that omen was more than fulfilled? Not that I care a button for the incident, but it will sway the minds of the vulgar."

"I think less of that," said Meston, "than of the words of that Ephiteach. If ever I saw a man truly inspired it was that man this

day, but whether by good or ill *dæmon* I wot not. To me his sayings are an enigma darker than the Sphinx's; but it fears me sore that they bode no good to King James his cause. If I read it aright, the revelation is not of the present but of the distant future, for it deals with potencies which even the wise have only dared to dream of, but not to predict. And there is much to come and go, long years laden, it may be, with misfortune to us all, before yon Ephiteach's vision comes to pass. It would have been well if Lord Mar had left the *taghairm* alone. Good rarely comes of it."

"'Them looks to freits, my maister dear,
Then freits will follow them,'"

hummed the Marischal; "but as for the predictions of this Egyptian, it is all black-letter to me. I can as soon believe that the Castletown there will become the British metropolis, as that Deeside will ever see a royal palace built again within its bounds. In faith, it would hardly suit some of our good friends in these glens to find themselves so close to

the lug o' the law. Eh, Inverey, said I aright?"

"We are country-bred hereabouts," said that chieftain, with a laugh, "and little skilled in kings and courts; but I would fain know at what hour the Ephiteach saw this vision, for all depends upon that. If in the morning, there is generally a quick fulfilment; if it is late in the day, it may be beyond the years of living man."

"Him that yields to spells, let spells yield to; if there be a God—and no one knows whether there be—leave it between ourselves and the dirks," put in the fierce Keppoch, in a couple of Gaelic proverbs.

Such a summing up was too profane for the majority of the company, who fell into a thoughtful silence the rest of the way, which was only broken by the Marischal's half-muttered remark, "I wonder what Mar thinks of all this at the bottom of his heart?"

I had the unexpected privilege of being an involuntary sharer with the Earl of his real

sentiments as to the supernatural marvels of the day, which were not quite the same as those which he uttered in public. To the chiefs he dwelt with enthusiasm on the glorious prospects which the second-sight had foreshadowed, spoke of the impossibility of its predictions erring, and ordered full details of the Ephiteach's vision to be published abroad among the clansmen; to the Lowlanders he laughed, shrugged his shoulders, and spoke of the enthusiasm which so good a *Taisch* would excite among the superstitious Highlandmen.

Lord Mar's kindness had provided me with a better lodging than that of the previous evening, and a closet had been assigned to me curtained off his own chamber. There I had retreated to escape for a time from the crowd and bustle of the castle hall and courtyard, and had thrown myself down upon my couch to muse undisturbed over the strange events of the day. The evening had begun to fall, and the twilight came duskily through the narrow windows, when the Earl and

Balmoral came into his lordship's chamber. Mar was giving orders about musters and provisionings, of levying cess upon those proprietors within reach who had made no appearance for King James, and of sending out recruiting parties to force refractory vassals to join the standard. When he had finished his instructions, the Earl carelessly asked Balmoral what he thought of the Ephiteach's prophecy.

The chieftain hummed and hawed, said he did not understand what it meant; it was dark sayings altogether, and very possibly had nothing to do with anything they had in hand.

"And you think that the fellow actually *saw* what he has described to us?"

"Surely, neither he nor any other man in the Strath would dare to pass a jest upon your lordship. And it is well known, too, that the Ephiteach is *taishatr*."

"You believe, then, in the second-sight?" asked the Earl, with something of scorn in his voice.

"Our fathers believed it, at any rate," was Balmoral's indirect reply; "and I see no reasons why we should think ourselves wiser than them. It is true the gift is less common nowadays, and the vision is darker, and many things are seen that seem far off to us. But as our byword goes, *Cha b'e an la am fear nach tigeadh*—The day will come, come who may."

When he had dismissed Balmoral, the Earl remained walking up and down the chamber absorbed in deep meditation, and occasionally muttering to himself. I was debating within me whether I had not better make him sensible of my immediate neighbourhood, when he paused opposite the window and burst out aloud.

"I cannot get that Egyptian and his vision out of my mind. Whatever it means, it was no imposture. If ever man was inspired, whether by God or devil, it was the Ephiteach. Balmoral was right. He would not dare to play with me thus. The man actually saw what he said he saw. That vision was a

cut above his own imagination. But what can it mean? To me it is mysterious as a prophecy in Holy Writ. A Queen of Scotland here on Deeside, in my lands! where no monarch has set foot since the days of the second Robert. A very unlikely spot for a sovereign to fix her seat in—unless, indeed, she were a princess of the house of Mar."

With a contemptuous snort the Earl turned away, and again paced up and down the room. I felt all the awkwardness of an eavesdropper, and was debating some means of making my presence known, when he again broke forth.

"And why should not a sovereign of the house of Mar be the fulfilment of the Ephiteach's prophecy? Who among the Scottish nobles stands nearer to the Scottish throne than I, John Erskine? Have I not as much of the blood of Bruce as any Stuarts among them? Will not my patent of duke place me high as any Douglas or Hamilton or Campbell in the land? The first of Scottish nobles. Ay, the first of English nobles too, if our plans

keep good; for those who are now holding back with cautious hesitancy will soon have to take the second seat. King James will owe everything to me, and, if he wins, he shall pay me. Ay, if he wins—there's the rub. Well, even if the worst comes, I have shown George that I am an enemy not to be trifled with, and he will have to pay a heavier price for my forbearance than that for which he might have had my proffered fealty. A royal palace and a queen reigning from Deeside. Pshaw! why do I trouble my head with dreams? But if there is anything in the second-sight, that vision must bode well for me and mine."

Here, to my inexpressible relief, one of the Earl's gentlemen entered to say that the Lord Pitsligo craved a few words of his leisure, and Mar accompanied him to the hall, leaving me half amused and half indignant at the Earl's self-disclosures, which, however, quite chimed in with the opinions that I had already formed of our commander.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Perhaps I ought to confess with shame that I begged the Earl of Mar's permission to absent myself for some days from the martial array that was going on at the Castletown, to pay a brief visit to Balmoral. Perhaps, too, I ought to have felt some mortification at the Earl's readiness to grant my request. But in fact I was not of much use—nay, I was rather in the way of leaders whose whole time was taken up in military preparations; and though Lord Mar flattered me that my counsels were of the highest value to him, and that he could not spare me beyond a day or two, I could not deceive myself but that there was more courtesy than sincerity in his assertions. When I begged to be allowed to serve

as a volunteer either among the horse or foot, or wherever he thought I could be of most use, he flatteringly said that he wished to keep me about his own person, where, he said loftily, he hoped I should find not less opportunity of wooing glory than in the regular ranks. And he took his leave of me, charging me to write favourably to our friends in London of his success in getting an army together, and of his speedy descent upon the Lowlands ; and bidding me rest and enjoy myself at Balmoral in better lodgings than he could at present offer me, until he had occasion for my services, he gave me a courteous dismissal.

Searching out Meston to inform him of my departure, I found the philosopher down on a haugh by the Dee, where rude stabling of boughs and wattles had been erected for the shelter of the horses. He was angrily haranguing some half-dozen excited Highlandmen, who stood before him with scowling looks and menacing gestures, some even with their drawn dirks, while behind him was his Aberdonian

servant, David Wobster, who glared round his master's back looks of wrath mixed with terror at those in front.

A few words served to explain the situation. David, before becoming a janitor in the Marischal College, had followed the avocation of sheriff's officer, or a concurrent, in Aberdeen, and in that capacity had come in hostile collision with many of the turbulent spirits who found shelter in Braemar and its adjacent glens. Some half-dozen Macgregors from Cromar, who had once been in his clutches for some depredation or other, had recognised him as a *quondam* limb of the law, and would have made short work of him had his master, then bent on an errand for the Earl Marischal, not accidentally come upon the scene. The men were angry, and determined to pay off an old score; and Meston, who would have been no match for so many, was endeavouring by expostulation to gain time until succour came up. This he explained in a few words, as I drew my sword and planted myself by his side.

"I warn you again," cried the Professor, "that you had better take yourselves off as quick as you may. If the provost-marshal comes the round, he will soon lay you by the heels, and the nearest tree to each of you will be the Earl's doom."

But a storm of mingled Gaelic and English was poured about our ears, as the men became more furious and pressed closer round us; while David, from behind our bodies as a rampart, did his best to inflame their fury by shouting, "Stick the Hieland thieves,—the limmers! Maisterfu' sorners are they, broken cateran, Macgregors of the Smoke ilka ane o' them; and by the Act o' James Sext there is nae mair hairm in cuttin' aff their heads than in killin' a maukin."

"Dirk him! stab him!" was the cry; "and you Sassenach gentlemen stand aside, unless you wish to share his fate. The man is a Hanoverian rat, and a sherra's officer to boot, and it ill becomes gentlemen to stand up for sic cattle."

"The gallows gapes for them," cried David, dancing with passion, but keeping prudently in the rear. "That lang chiel wi' the plaid was put to the horn in the year aught for stealin' a firkin o' butter frae the gudewife o' Kirnlang."

"Py Cot! but I shall cut the tongue out of his foul mouth!" cried the party thus accused, and he rushed forward to get at his reviler. I seized the man and hurled him back: in his turn he made at me fiercely with his dirk, and, before I could parry his blow, had given me a deep slash on the right arm. With my left hand I again hurled him back; and as he again rushed madly upon me, he received my sword-thrust right through the heart, and fell to the ground with a wild cry of agony or rage—I know not which.

"*Vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbra,*" cried Meston, as he laid about him with his broadsword, like a man plying a flail; "the sight of a Keith trooper would be worth a gold Jacobus."

The Highlandmen, maddened by the spectacle of the fallen man, pressed us more fiercely, and others were gathering round, who, though they took no part in the combat, egged on the assailants by Gaelic shouts of encouragement. While we were thus keeping them at bay,—Meston's complete ignorance of broadsword fencing being really more formidable than my more skilful thrust and parry, for he kept his sword whistling through the air in all conceivable directions as he danced about on the turf,—a cry arose, and half-a-dozen horsemen galloped in among us, nearly upsetting the combatants on both sides.

"Hola there! down with your arms," cried an officer, "or we shall cut you down on both sides. Be off with you, ye Highland rascals, or I shall have you bound and taken to the quarter-guard. And you, gentlemen, what the devil discipline do you call this, brawling with the clansmen in camp? A man slain, too. Here, fellows, carry off your dead comrade; and do you," he ordered his men, "clear the

ground, and drive these kilts back to their own quarters. You will have to answer for this fray to the Lieutenant-General," he added, turning to us.

"Faith, General," said the Professor, "our answer is made for us. If Lord Mar cannot keep better order in his camp, we shall soon have fighting enough among ourselves, without waiting for the Hanoverians, if every old grudge is to be ripped up and made a *casus belli*." And he proceeded to explain the cause of the affray to General Hamilton and to other gentlemen who came up in the meantime, with the issue that the General promised to see our assailants punished, and gave the Professor warning to keep his follower, whose antecedents had been so obnoxious, out of harm's way. "And, upon my soul," he said with a laugh, "a sheriff's officer is likely to find himself in a throng of acquaintances here, for the Adullamites muster strongly in our leaguer. But you, sir," he added, observing me staggering and on the point of fainting,

"seem to be wounded. Aid him there, some one."

In fact, the stab I had received had made a severe gash in my arm, cutting and tearing the fleshy muscles, as a dirk in a practised hand always does, and I was standing by this time in a pool of my own blood. Luckily, Meston, among his other numerous accomplishments, was a not unskilful surgeon, and in a trice he had my arm bound, and the wound dressed and bandaged. I was assisted back to the castle, where I lay down for a little on a couch; while the Professor, having brewed me a potion of herbs, proceeded to search for the materials to make a healing salve, for which he said he had the receipt from his friend and special crony, Dr Archibald Pitcairn, the greatest Æsculapius in Scotland.

It was not until I was left alone that the feeling came to me of an entirely new sensation. I had taken a human life—involuntarily, as I assured myself, but still the man's blood was red on my hands. It was in the purest

self-defence; it was probably my life or his, for there was a look of murder in the dark passionate visage which but a little ago had been before my eyes, and which one thrust of mine had contorted into a death-agony. The savage would have slain me without the faintest feeling of remorse, and I felt angry at myself for wasting even a passing thought of regret on such a wretch. It had been done in an instant; the man's life had been taken almost without effort on my part. A rush, a stab, a thrust, and there was one life less in this world, one soul more—where? A mighty change to be wrought with one little turn of the wrist, one push with a few feet of steel. And whom had the man left behind to mourn his loss? Wild and savage as he had seemed, he might have been gentle or kind enough in the love of mother, of child, or wife. My mind conjured up a pitiful picture of some little hut in the recesses of a brown glen, mud-walled and heather-thatched, from which came a cry for vengeance,

mixed with the melancholy wailing of the Highland coronach, such as I had once already heard since I had come to these glens. Innocent of all intent as I felt myself to be, I experienced a poignant sense of remorse, and would have given my wounded right arm itself to have bid the dead man live and once more tread the heather, and thus have had my mind freed from the oppression of a horrible and unusual feeling. A singular fate that two persons whose ways lay so far apart should thus be thrown into deadly conflict, which neither could apparently avoid! What but an unseen Destiny could have brought about such a catastrophe!

Meston came back with Balmoral, and seeing me downcast, they both did their best to revive my spirits. Meston assured me that with care I would be able to use my sword in a week again. Balmoral added that the Earl had been very indignant at the conduct of our assailants. He was heartily glad that I had punished one of the villains, and would have

hanged the others ; but by this time they were half-way up Alt-dowrie, and making probably for the wilds of Morven or the corries of Ben Avon. It was a lucky thing, added Balmoral, cheerfully, that the dead man was of a broken clan, and had no chief to make trouble about blood-money. "They are an unchancy generation these Macgregors of the Smoke, as we call them, and would be little missed in the country though they were all hanging by one tether."

I inquired if they knew if the man had any family whose claims upon him were of more consequence than those of his chief; but such an idea was dismissed by both Balmoral and Meston as quite untenable, a notion only applicable to Lowlanders. All that they knew of the deceased was that he was a Macgregor from Cromar or the skirts of Morven, and if any one could claim satisfaction for his slaughter it was the Earl of Aboyne, from whose lands he came, and who was very unlikely to make any complaint about the matter. "For," said Balmoral, "these Mac-

gregors, though they may be handy at a time when Aboyne wants to molest an unfriend, are a perfect *herry* to his kindly tenants, being thieves and cateran from time out of mind. And you will have to keep your eyes about you, Mr Bardolph, for every one of the name will have you at feud, although Lord Mar has warned them that it is certain death to any man who attempts to steer you, and to all his kith, kin, and allies."

Then ensued a friendly contest between Balmoral and Meston regarding my journey to the house of the chieftain—the former declaring that I would have better rest and attendance at Balmoral than in the turmoil of Mar's camp; the latter declaring that I must stay by him, and have my wound attended to after the treatment prescribed in the 'Elementa Medicinæ Physico Mathematica,' by the most learned Dr Pitcairn, for fever would very possibly set in, and he would not answer for what further complications might ensue if he were not by to physic me. And

when I proved obstinate in my purpose, Balmoral readily solved the difficulty by inviting my physician to accompany me. The good-natured Meston readily consented, if he could obtain the consent of his patron, the Earl Marischal. "And in troth," said he, "it will be just as well to get that luckless man of mine, Dauvit Wobster, out of this before he gets a skean in his wyme, or is fished out of the Dee with heels and head tied together, and a stone to steady him. I must surely have been possessed when I brought a man of Dauvit's antecedents into a gathering where every other back bears the marks of the hangman's tawse, and every second man you meet is at the horn."

So in the mellow autumn afternoon we rode down the Dee, passing under the shadow of the great Craig Cluny, and stopping for a short time at the camp at Inver, where already a goodly army of Highlandmen and a small sprinkling of horse was collected. The slopes were dotted with groups of clansmen, whose

picturesque costume and bright arms infused a sense of quick life into the surrounding solitudes. Feats of strength were being tried upon the level sward, the essay being to raise the weighty trunk of a tree, from which the branches had been lopped off, high up on the shoulder, balance it, and toss it clean over lengthways—an exploit which the length and weight of the beam prevented but a very few from successfully achieving. Here some dozen were madly dancing to the quick notes of a reel, there some score of recruits were being put through their sword exercise,—and above all the noise and shouting pealed the notes of many bagpipes, which, though playing different tunes, mingled in the free expanse into one unintelligible harmony.

As we went on our way, I remarked to Balmoral that such a scene must be strangely different from the solitude which the glens usually afforded, and which would soon again be restored when the army marched.

"Ay," he rejoined, shaking his head, and

suppressing a sigh. "In another week there will scarcely be a man left between Inverey and the Pass of Ballater, except carles whose fighting days are over, to defend the country from the cateran, if they come down in force; or from King George's sojers, if they should manage to win past us. Not that there will be much left to 'tice any one this way, for the Earl, it is like, will eat up every cloot and horn except the deer, before he leaves the Strath. The faulds and byres of Balmoral are toom already, and how they are to be replenished, the deil tak' me gin I can see, unless we can make as far south as Auld Reekie by the time of Hallow Fair."

"And if you did, Balmoral," said Meston, with a laugh, "it fears me the graziers would find you but an unprofitable customer. Andrew Ferrara's note of hand would be about as acceptable to them as an Equivalent Exchequer bill."

"It would be less easily protested, as they call it at the new bank you have set up in

Aberdeen," retorted Balmoral, "and the which I hope the Lord Marischal will redd up when he goes thither next week to proclaim King James."

"If he gets much for his pains I'm sore mistaken. The paper banks are not like the shop of a decent goldsmith, which is generally worth ransacking. You might as well spulzie a stationer's buith as one of the new banks."

"Ay, the times are sore changed," sighed Balmoral. "In his auld colonelling days, my father never came by a borrows-town but he made it pay his expenses, and something as well by way of a luck-penny, to keep him from coming back the same road. And here is Lord Mar, with a locked military chest, and ordinances against private spulzie. It's a' for the Yearl an' naething for Donald with him."

The sun was setting as we reached Balmoral, and though his lingering rays still kindled the purple heather, and glanced among the grey cairns on the hill above Crathie, the shadow of evening had fallen upon the valley. Weak-

ened with the loss of blood and exhausted by the irritation of my wound, I was glad once more to be under Balmoral's hospitable roof. Faint and weary as I was, the sight of Bess Farquharson was a better restorative than the one which Meston insisted on forcing me to swallow, regretting that he could not recommend me to take a tass of usquebaugh upon a green wound, an obstacle which he hastened to assure Balmoral did not exist in his own case after his ride. I felt a glow of pleasurable excitement when I observed that Bess turned deadly pale, and seemed on the verge of fainting, when she heard of my encounter and wound, which the Professor did not make the less of that he had undertaken to cure it. But the lady Balmoral, who was full of practical sympathy, immediately ordered me to repose; and as she boasted of the sovereign powers of a healing balsam which had been handed down to her from her grandmother, and which had made marvellous cures in the time of Montrose's troubles, Meston's professional jealousy

was kindled, and he hurried me off in case the dame should insist upon making trial of her salve.

When left alone I threw myself on my bed, but the excitement of the day, and some degree of fever from my wound, would not allow me to rest. I tried to soothe myself with thoughts of Bess, of sweet stolen interviews—that perhaps she would even come to nurse me if my hurt confined me to my room. But always the thought of that dead Highlandman, his last look of agony and hatred, his dying cry, came back to my memory. It was in vain that I strove to turn my thoughts in some other direction; my fancy, wandering as in a circle, always came back to the same point. I began to hate my unfortunate victim now that he was dead, though I had not the slightest feeling of animosity to him even in the death-struggle. I wished that his companions would seek revenge. It would give me some satisfaction to kill them in fair fight, instead of the remorse which was now vexing me.

I could not rest, and rose and opened my window, and looked out into the dusky twilight. The dark shadow of the hills lay all around, deepening the gloom. From the windows in the castle hall, where Balmoral and Meston were doubtless carousing, a gleam of light streamed forth upon the grass, and played among the drooping branches and white stem of an old birch-tree. A rushing murmur came up from the Dee. Presently a woman's voice—one of the maids, doubtless, for it was not Bess's—began to sing,—a low mournful Gaelic song, rising to a deep-drawn wail of sorrow. The plaintive melody came with soothing charm to my hearing, and I stood still and listened. The song, as I afterwards found out, was a lament for Donald Oig, a great hero of Montrose's wars. His house of Monaltrie lay across the river on the slope of the hill opposite Balmoral; and his murder in an affray with the Covenanters in Aberdeen was a favourite theme for the minstrels of the Clan Farquharson.

"Raise a wail through Strathdee to the springs of the Ey,
A wail that Clan Findlay shall echo for aye,
Youth, beauty, and manhood lie cold in the clay,
For dead is Donald Oig of Monaltrie.

No more his fleet foot o'er the heather shall bound,
No more shall Glen Gairn to his horn resound,
And in Morven's brown corries the deer may sleep sound,
For dead is Donald Oig of Monaltrie."

The song was a long one—as all such Gaelic elegies appear to be—setting forth, doubtless with appropriate embellishments, the history and exploits of the subject of the lament, and after a few more stanzas I went back to bed and lay and listened to the mournful melody and unknown words; and the strains were slowly floating about my ears in low pathetic monotone when exhaustion got the better of me, and I fell into a deep and dreamless slumber.

CHAPTER XXV.

Next morning I awoke so much refreshed, and with the pain of my wound so much alleviated, that I could not reconcile my conscience with playing the part of invalid; and in spite of Meston's remonstrances, and the cautions of Balmoral, whom he called in to aid his authority, I insisted on quitting my room. No doubt if I had had any assurance that Bess would have helped to nurse me, I would have been well content to regard myself as still a patient; but when Meston had come in to see me in the morning, had shaken his head and talked of fever, and declared his intention of securing me from being disturbed by forbidding any one to enter the room except himself, I was not long in protesting my perfect recovery.

At first the leech's temper was inclined to be ruffled by my perversity, for like all dabblers in the healing art, he was full of the important airs for which the occasion afforded excuse; but he speedily solaced himself by loud and immoderate boasting of the cleverness and rapidity with which he had effected so complete a cure, until lady Balmoral, who, like all notable matrons, had a great idea of her own medical skill, was stung to jealousy.

"Since the wordle began," the dame tartly observed, "there had never been sae much made of a bit clean cut from a *skean occle.* Had it been a clout from a Lochaber-axe, or the baff of a pistolet ball, there might have been something to make a say about. No' that I am making licht o' your wound, Mr Bardolph, which I daresay is sair enough; but if you would let me make a pootice o' wawvrin leaves, and get Tammie Doo that lives across the water to gie you a charm for it, I'se warrant your arm will be hail and fere sooner than wi' a' the Professor's pottycarrying."

But the Professor was not to be thus slighted, and he boldly attacked the superstitious treatment of wounds and diseases, and the quackery of "skeelly" (skilly) men and cozening charmers, while the dame had innumerable instances of home-made cures to oppose to his learned theories. Balmoral laughed heartily at the wordy combat, and wickedly did his best to egg on both sides, advising the Professor to fortify himself with a dram of usquebaugh, and slyly emphasising all disparagements to his wife's pet remedies. To what pitch the hot blood thus engendered might have reached it was hard to say, for when Meston sneered at the efficacy of St Nathalan's Well for the cure of palsy, the lady, after an indignant denunciation of his "awtheism," quitted his impious company with an air of withering scorn.

One morning a few days after, when my wound had ceased to give me much trouble, and I felt quite strong and refreshed, I declared my burning desire to see the mighty mountain of Lochnagar, and, emboldened by Balmoral's

geniality, asked Bess in his presence if she would condescend to be my guide. While she was hesitating as to whether her mother could spare her, Balmoral broke in by ordering her to get ready to accompany me. He was too busy with his preparations, he apologised, else it would have been his pleasant duty to have been my companion, when we would doubtless have got a shot at a roe; but he hoped that when the campaign was over he would be able to give me a great hunt in Glen Gelder and the White Mount. He would send George of Coldrach and a *gillie* to accompany us.

This damped my elation. With George of Coldrach as our companion, a visit to Lochnagar became suddenly deprived of all its charms. I looked in vain to the mountains to see if the clouds would afford an excuse for declining the expedition at the last moment, but there was not a wreath of mist to be seen, and the horizon was spotless blue. But my star was still in the ascendant. George of Coldrach had already started that morning down the

Dee for Auchlossan to bring up some of the laird's laggard tenants, and was by this time well beyond the Muir of Dinnet. Might good luck go with him! He carried my good wishes along with him for once. But a squire was found in the laird's henchman, Duncan M'Hardy, who was forthwith ordered to get ready for the journey.

I much fear that the lady Balmoral viewed this expedition with less satisfaction than her husband, for she soon after joined him in the courtyard, and seemed from her manner to be remonstrating with him with considerable show of acrimony. I was standing by the open window, and though I drew back discreetly, I could not help overhearing the words "making up to Bess," "Englishman," and "George of Coldrach,"—an ominous conjunction, whatever it might mean. The laird fidgeted uneasily, shrugged his shoulders, and then, with a "Tuts, mere havers," turned upon his heel and left her; and presently Duncan M'Hardy and the ponies, rough, unkempt,

but active and wiry brutes, appeared at the door.

Bess came out with a heightened colour, which led me to believe that her mother had taken the precaution to read her a lecture about keeping me at a proper distance; and the good dame followed, to see her daughter comfortably seated in the saddle. I had hoped that she might ride on a pillion behind me, as is the custom with country ladies, and that I might have her dear arms round me during the journey; but Bess was an expert horse-woman, and enveloped in her green mantle, with her fair face framed in its hood, sat her horse as boldly as an amazonian queen.

With warnings to beware of the mist and to avoid the craigs, we rode on our way. We ascended Glen Gelder along a narrow track, beaten either by the deer or the huntsman among the heather, high up above the bed of the stream, which rushed down its rugged channel under a covering of green hazels, birches, and alders, amid which an ancient

pine here and there raised its lofty head. The narrow and rugged path gave me an excuse for dismounting and taking Bess's bridle, although I could see that it was an excuse not patent to our attendant, who from the curl of his lip evidently thought that my fair companion was at least as well able to take care of herself as I was. So I sent him on in front the better to show us the way, judging that he would be less able to make observations with his back turned upon us.

And then we poured out our hearts to each other; but what we said shall not be set down here. What are these fine speeches which Strephon sighs out to Chloe over whole pages of romances and play-books, but so many promptings for youthful fools to imitate? Though I write this for the instruction of my posterity, I have no wish that they should take their grand-dad's love-making as a model for their own. I fear the high soul and chivalry of Queen Anne's courtiers have given way to grosser ideas and more commonplace modes

of expression, and the language of love as it was spoken in my day may seem as obsolete and stilted as the rhapsodies of Amadis de Gaul or Palmerin de Oliva are to my taste. Every one has his own method of making love, and provided it be to the point, it is just as good as any other. I am of Farmer Hoggins's mind in this matter—my farmer Hoggins of Styeham. A Nottingham attorney's apprentice has been besieging his daughter, for the old man is passing wealthy, had written her a letter copied out of 'Love's School, or a New and Merry Book of Compliments,' the sole change being the name of Melissa into Moggie. "I doan't hold to this kind o' langwich, squoire," said the old man, showing me the epistle, full of "Cupid's darts," "divine charms," "fires," "flames," "torments," "transports," and "unclouded bliss." "'Tain't drorin' a straight furrer, to my moind. Looks as if there wur something behindhaand, like. When I coarted my oäld 'oman, I sayed, 'Joan, will ye haäve me?' And she sayed, as solumly as if we were

boath afore t' passun, 'Simon, I wilt,' sez she, and there wur nowt more to do about it."

But that what passed was very absorbing may be judged from the fact that we had mounted Glen Gelder and ridden up the stream called Alt-an-Laiogh, and were upon the wide track of moor and moss known as Druim Odhar almost before we knew where we were. A wide stretch of dark-brown heather, broken in parts by green patches of bog, lay spread out before us. Around us on all sides were hills towering up into the blue sky, their sides showing crag and glen and corrie with picturesque diversity. But high up upon our left frowned the crest of Lochnagar, and all the other mountains became dwarfed into insignificance in his sombre presence. From where we were we could look along the face of the great corrie, like an amphitheatre hewn out of the side of the mountain. A bare wall of precipitous crags enfaced the upper part of the mountain, and at the bottom a great sloping buttress of rock and stone, loosened

by time and storms from its sides, extended deep down into the valley beneath. Even in the bright sunshine Lochnagar maintained his dark and awful semblance of majesty: the light that sparkled on his precipices and played around his summit revealed only stern and fearful outlines, and the rays glancing athwart the wet fronts of the cliffs made their grey faces dazzle with a snowy coldness. The charm of Lochnagar is a charm of awe. If the day ever come when a poet shall catch real inspiration from his presence, that poet must have a mind as susceptible to the majesty of awe and the grandeur of gloom as was that of the ancient Florentine who wrote of the Inferno.

The road was broken and rough across the moor, and our guide waited for us, to save us from being "whommelt in a moss-pot," as he called it, or, in plainer words, from sinking in a bog. We startled the black-grouse in large coveys from among the long heather, and they flew away with whirring cries in the direction

of the Conachcraig slopes. There was no sign of human life in this wild solitude except our own presence; no shepherd's shieling or hunter's hut to dispute the loneliness of nature. Away in the direction of the Meall Coire, the practised eye of M'Hardy lighted on a herd of deer lying or grazing about on a green slope; and I must have sunk very low in his estimation when I declined to go out of our way the matter of a mile or two on the chance of getting a shot at a stag with the gun which he had had the forethought to bring with him. But I felt too much at peace with the wilds to wish to slaughter any of their denizens.

At a little lake at the bottom of the corrie, called Loch-an-Ean, which was divided into three by bars of moss and turf, M'Hardy halted, and proposed that we should make the ascent on foot, while he waited for us below with the horses. No proposal could have been more to my taste: I at once conceived a much more favourable opinion of M'Hardy than I had at first formed; and I

mentally resolved that we should not hurry our return. With many injunctions from our guide to descend immediately at the first sign of mist—all of which were addressed to Bess, for it was evident my judgment went for nothing in his eyes—and with a ram's-horn vessel of usquebaugh, which he insisted on my carrying—luckily, as matters turned out —we set our faces to the heather.

And ye whose mountaineering experiences have been confined to a holiday scramble up the slopes of Richmond and Greenwich, let me tell you that the ascent of Lochnagar on a hot autumn afternoon is not purely pastime. Southland legs, unaccustomed to the heather, are apt to feel singularly awkward, and to want the addition of a few joints more than nature has provided them with. In days when I was young and vain, I may have piqued myself upon my elegant lounge along the Mall; but I am sensible I must have cut a somewhat awkward figure struggling up the steep shoulder of Lochnagar under my mistress's very eyes.

Nevertheless, being such as I was, I scrambled on, now slipping, now stumbling, now clutching at a bush of heather to maintain my balance; now pulling up for a minute, panting and breathless, and ever keeping my eyes fixed upon the summit, which seemed to recede the farther the higher I climbed. But be this told to my renown, that amid all my toiling and floundering, my reputation for gallantry was maintained; for I continued to pour forth the tale of my passion, and a thousand endearments besides, into the ears of Bess, who, like a second Camilla, seemed to brush along the heather-bells without bending them, in silence.

"Why, my darling, do you say not one word to me?" I panted out, as we paused to draw breath upon a green hillock. "Has your heart not some faint response to give back to mine?"

"Because I want all my breath for climbing the brae. You should not talk going up a hill, for you get tired out the sooner," she

retorted, with a wicked but musical laugh. She laughed so merrily that I felt sure that she was letting off her pent-up merriment at my awkward performances; but I punished her by catching her in my arms and kissing her over and over again.

The rest of the ascent was made more satisfactorily by our mutual efforts. If speed is an object, it is probably not the quickest way to climb a steep hill with your arm round a young woman's waist. But to feel yourself thus mounting skywards, literally in the arms of love, rising high up above the gross material world, hand in hand and heart by heart together, is an experience that would require a chapter to itself, were I to permit my sober narrative to stray into the domains of fancy. Never had I seen Bess so beautiful. She had thrown back her hood, and the light winds played among her soft brown hair; her face was glowing with hues of healthy exertion—not hot and flushed and blowzed, like the visages of some of our tightly laced Court ladies after

toiling up two dozen pair of stairs to a ball-room; and her eyes shone with the kindly light of love. And when I placed her head on my shoulder, as we sat down on the summit of the mountain side by side, with my arm around her, I felt for a moment as if we had done with time and the world, and only wanted wings to soar away together in the empyrean around us. But Bess, the practical, recalled me to myself. I had come to see the view from Lochnagar, and she had come to point it out to me; but first I must refresh myself from M'Hardy's ram's-horn, and then fetch her some water from a grey rock which caught a tiny spring as in a miniature reservoir. When this was done, we looked about us, and saw such a sight as the eye can seldom gaze on elsewhere. Round us on all sides were the rugged forms of giant mountains, girdling about Lochnagar like his allies and peers, each with his glens and straths, his rivers and waters, disposed around his ample skirts. The huge mass of Ben Muick Dhui, with the

blue summit of Cairngorm and the rounded crest of Ben Avon, bounded the view behind us. In front the great chain of the Grampians was visible, stretching down to Dunkeld; and through these might be seen other hills far away to the south, even beyond the Forth. Wherever the eye turned, it rested on some fresh mountain-peak,—the Buck of the Cabrach, and the conical Tap o' Noth, in the Duke of Gordon's country; the long back of Bennachie; and, almost under us, Mount Keen and Mount Battock, with the braes of Angus and Mearns. The theatre was wide enough to take in many shires, with their towns and rivers; but the arbitrary divisions of man counted little from such a height, and the eye followed the great lines which Nature herself had drawn on her own map. The prospect was bewildering in its extent and wild variety; but though it lay under our feet, yet it seemed a land very far away to our sublimified souls on the mountain-top. The heavens above, in truth, seemed far closer to us.

Said I to Bess, "Here we have got above earth, and all its cares and disappointments. Does it not seem a pity to have to go back again since we have come so far? If we could only fly away through these blissful clouds of blue, together and together, and wherever we found ourselves, there sure enough would be heaven."

"But there is no marrying or giving in marriage in heaven," quoth Bess, with a demure look up in my face.

"True, my sweet, I had forgotten that," I retorted, punishing her with a kiss for her impertinence; "wherefore we shall be well content with earth and its institutions for the span of our natural lives. But say, Bess mine, do you not feel that you and I together could be supremely happy in ourselves, away altogether from the world, as we sit here, and with nought but love to bear us company."

"I am always happy when I am with you," she answered, nestling closer to me; "but will you always be happy with me? I am but

a simple Scots lassie, and have seen little of the ways of great people, and I hardly know how to bear myself among them."

"Go where you may, you will never see any one so worthy of homage as yourself, Bess; you are the Queen of Hearts."

"Ay, on the top of Lochnagar, with never another maiden for ten miles round us. But once we reach ground again, I shall only be plain Bess of Balmoral, with my pedigree longer than my tocher."

"I care as little for the one as for the other. It is for you, for yourself, that I adore you, Bess. Why will you not let me speak to your father, and get his consent, so that we may be betrothed before we start on this campaign, and get married as soon as we come back victorious."

"No," said Bess, shaking her head decidedly. "My father has more than enough of cares on his mind already, and it would be cruel to add to them at such a time. He will go easier to the wars if he thinks that all will be well with

my mother and me in case anything should happen to him."

"And would it not be a greater comfort to him that his daughter would be protected by a husband—that your mother would have a son to guard and defend his rights?"

"It would," said Bess, with some hesitation; "but then, you see," she added, with a mischievous glance into my eyes, "he would rather have the husband and son of his own choosing than mine."

I am afraid I must have uttered a furious oath, for Bess shuddered and clung to me beseechingly. "Is there any one who dares pretend? any one who has asked him? any other whom he would wish to have for your husband?" I cried.

"You know I would have no one but you," she entreated, disarming me of my indignation with one glance of her eyes, "not though there was not another man in the world," an assertion quite as soothing as if it had been strictly logical. "But," she said, emboldened by my

redoubled kisses and caresses, "my father does think of George of Coldrach as a man for me, and would like him to be my husband and laird of Balmoral when he is dead and gone. And Inverey and Auchindryne and Invercauld have all said that as I was a woman I must marry in the clan, and keep Balmoral in the name of Farquharson; and that if I did not like George of Coldrach, I might have my choice of Lawrence of Cobbletoun or young Donald of Micras."

"D—nation seize all the three!" I cried, in an agony of doubt. I now knew how from the first my prejudices had been stirred by George of Coldrach, and no doubt the candidates from Cobbletoun and Micras were bumpkins not less bullying than their relative. But my heart sank when I considered the advantages which these aspirants could count in kinship and neighbourhood over me, whose home was so far distant, and whose future was so dark if this expedition were driven upon the rocks. I could only trust to my power

over Bess herself for enabling me to win her, a poor nymph among the satyrs, as my fancy painted her.

"I have faith in you, Bess," I urged, earnestly; "you will never allow yourself to be swayed by the reasonings of your family and kindred. I vow to God if you were to throw me over now, I had rather you pushed me over that giant cliff just behind us, and left my mangled body to the ravens and eagles."

"Whatever befalls, I shall never be untrue to you," replied Bess, looking with her clear earnest eyes all dim with moisture. "You alone have had all my love and all my troth."

How long we sat there, entranced in love too great to find utterance in speech, I cannot tell, for we were unconscious of the flight of the minutes—unconscious, too, of the transformations that were going on around us, until all at once Bess sprang to her feet with a cry of "The mist! the mist!"

And, sure enough, there was the mist rapidly surrounding the peak where we were seated.

Beneath us lay a great grey sea of vapour, surging towards us from the west, filling the valleys and rapidly creeping up the hillsides. Already the peaks of the Monadh Rua hills seemed mere islands in this phantom ocean; the great mass of Ben Muick Dhui loomed blackly indistinct through the fog, which was creeping up its broad shoulders. Away to the north and east of us sheets of white mist were rapidly scurrying along, blotting out the country between us and Morven, Culbleen, and Mount Keen, whose masses offered for a little a brief resistance to its volume, until they too were overwhelmed and disappeared. Down beneath us the mist came creeping up Lochnagar in stealthy treacherous folds. It was as if we had been stranded on some rock in the great ocean, with the tide rising around us, which would soon swallow us up out of sight.

"We must go down at once," said Bess, hurriedly; "if the black mist comes down on us, we may lose our way, and it is dangerous going astray on Lochnagar. Even hunters

have got lost and have fallen over the craigs, and their bodies have not been found for months after."

"Nay," said I, "I am sure I could find my way down by the track we came up. It does not seem so mighty difficult."

"You do not know what Lochnagar is in mist," replied Bess, energetically. "The mist changes the look of everything. You come to a rock or a corrie that you know quite well at other times, and you see them strange, and think you had never seen them before. And when you come to a burn, you sometimes think that it must be running up-hill. The mist changes the look of everything to mislead you."

She hurried me down the slope, and very soon we were shrouded in the vapour. Just as we were entering the ascending cloud, I paused for a moment and looked around me. If you have ever stood in the sea with the water level with your head, and looked out on the waste of waves, you can form some idea,

the nearest I can give you, of what I then beheld. A level expanse of mist stretched out before me far as the eye could see, smooth, as if a roller had been passed over it, but ever steadily rising heavenwards. In the background it seemed like a great wall rolling steadily towards us, shutting out all traces of earth and sky.

"Come quick," cried Bess, pulling me downward; "it is growing thicker and thicker, and we shall have much to do to make our way to Loch-an-Ean, where Duncan M'Hardy is waiting with the horses. We shall follow this track, which is surely the one we came up by."

We stumbled downwards through the thick vapour. I had always had the idea that it was much easier to go down a hill than to go up one, but my experience on Lochnagar somewhat shook my faith in this impression. Bess with her mountaineering experience told me not to lift my feet, but to put them flat out before me, and with petticoats trimly gathered

up showed me how to walk ; but I fear I must have been too absorbed in my admiration of her shapely ankles to learn the lesson right, for my attempt to copy her motion resulted in a fall, and I had to potter along in my own way. We had to move with caution too, for we could not see more than a yard before our feet, and there were rocks and scaurs around, which, though not precipitous like the other side of the mountain, would have yet been ugly declivities to roll over. When we had gone on for some time, we gradually became aware that instead of descending we were climbing up a ridge, which appeared to get steeper and steeper as we went on.

"We should not have had to cross this brae," said Bess, pausing thoughtfully. "We must be keeping too near to the shoulder of the hill. Let us go farther down." And farther down we went, even into unknown depths, for the heather grew thicker and longer, and was broken by bare banks of black

peat, with here and there little patches of mossy bog; but our way was more along a level, roughly broken as it was at times by heights and hollows. It was evident even to my inexperience that we must be nearing the foot of the mountain, and I said so to Bess.

"Yes," she said, "I think we must be on the way to Loch-an-Ean now. We shall go on a little way, and then you shall shout for Duncan, who will answer us, and his voice will guide us through the mist."

We went on a little way, and then I climbed up a low grey rock and invoked the name of Duncan M'Hardy so lustily that all the echoes rang it back again. But this was the only reply we received, except the scream of some startled curlews, whose wings we could hear as they circled wildly above us in the thick mist. The mist pressed denser and closer around us, so close that the sounds were muffled and dull.

"We must go on farther," said Bess, "and then we shall stop and call again."

We made our way along another long track

of moorland where the heather was shorter, and across some tracts of ground strewed with small cairns of grey stones. I did not remember having passed that on our way up the mountain, and I said so to Bess. She owned we had not, and thought we must be crossing the shoulder of Lochnagar higher up than the way by which we came.

But again we found ourselves climbing a height, and it almost seemed that in whatever direction we turned ourselves, there was a hill ready to bar our way. Even I knew that this should not have been so, for, as it had been a scramble up-hill the whole way, there ought to have been no more climbing on the down track; but I did not venture on remarking this to Bess, for I fancied her face was beginning to show signs of disappointment and anxiety, so I trudged on beside her with dogged perseverance.

Soon, after a short descent, we found ourselves in the bottom of a corrie, a semicircular hollow with green sloping banks, and masses

of grey rock frowning over the top of it. Bess, as she looked round her, gave a little cry, and then fairly confessed she had mistaken the way.

"We shall be lost until the mist lifts," she cried. "I do not know this corrie at all. There is no place like this on our way to Loch-an-Ean. We must have wandered towards the White Mount. What shall we do?"

I consoled her as well as I could, being able to give no counsel. A little spring bubbled out from beneath a rock at the bottom of the corrie, and I made her sit down there and rest, and forced her to drink a small drop of usquebaugh from M'Hardy's ram's-horn, mixed with the clear cold water.

"We shall light on the loch somehow or other," I assured her; "and the mist may speedily break up, and then we shall see where we are."

She shook her head. "You do not know the hills. The mist may hang here for a week without rising, and we might wander on for

days, and then come back to the place from which we started. I am sure we are nowhere near the loch."

"Then," said I, sitting down beside her, "we may just as well stay here until we see what happens, as wander about blindly through the mountains. Won't they send people to search for us if we do not turn up?"

"No, no, that must not be," cried Bess, starting to her feet; "we must go on. The only thing we have to guide us is the wind, which was in our backs going up, and we must keep our faces to it now."

There was no wind in the bottom of the corrie, and but little when we again climbed out of it, but we endeavoured to go against it, and trudged on for a long time in silence. That was not my fault, but Bess was evidently growing more and more anxious, and indisposed to talk, and I did not want to worry her. I was beginning to pity her from the bottom of my heart, for I was feeling tired out myself, and felt sure that she must be growing

exhausted, but she walked bravely on, and would confess to no fatigues.

Meanwhile the day was waning. The mist grew darker and wetter, and seemed to weigh more heavily upon us. Bess's hood lay back on her shoulders, and her brown locks were dank and wet. The predicament was growing unpleasant. The idea of passing an autumn night on Lochnagar without food or shelter passed a jest. And Bess too! What would be said of her? I did not know the Scotch feelings about propriety, but if one of my own countrywomen had been exposed to such a mischance, tongues would have been set a-wagging to some purpose. And I was the cause of all this mischief. What answer was I to make to Balmoral and his lady? To declare that my love for Bess was a sufficient safeguard of her honour. But that scarcely seemed to be the most fitting way of asking them to give me their daughter for my wife.

We were struggling up another slope, when suddenly a gust of wind lifted the mist around

us, and we saw that we were on a spur of hill with rounded shoulders, dipping abruptly into unknown depths of fog. Bess could form no idea of where we were, but she thought we must have come a long distance out of our way. Once more I shouted for Duncan M'Hardy, but there was no reply, and the echoes sounded dismal in our ears. Once more we went on our way down the spur of the hill, but we were both tired and disheartened, and Bess seemed about to cry as we were again swallowed up in the folds of the mist. And, to add to our mortification, night was beginning to fall.

I did my best to cheer up Bess, by suggesting that I thought the mist was rising—it was, in truth, growing thicker, if that were possible; that there was a young moon, which would light our steps back to Balmoral whenever we saw our way clearly; that we would certainly before long light upon Duncan and the horses. But Bess was not to be comforted. Her only hope seemed to be that if we went

on we must arrive somewhere—a probability which, though very patent in every other part of the world, seemed to be somewhat doubtful in the wild tracts of Lochnagar.

At last we lighted upon a small burn which flowed down a narrow glen of its own, whose green bottom was flanked on both sides by rugged banks and frequent blocks of stone. "Let us follow the burn," said Bess; "it must guide us to a loch or to a larger water, and then we shall know whereabout we are."

We went down the course of the burn, which in some places was very narrow and precipitous. Occasionally the little stream would bound over a steep height in a miniature waterfall, down the side of which I had to assist my companion. At other times it had disappeared into the earth, and its course was only indicated by the grassy bed which covered its hidden waters. Then for a space it would reappear on the surface, and glide cold and black along a little stretch of level, with the long heather coming close down to its

marges, and almost concealing its channel. Bess said she hoped it ran into either Loch-an-Ean or the Dhu Loch, and in either case we should soon find Duncan and our horses.

But hope is ever fallacious. The little glen widened out as we reached the level, but instead of the burn running into a loch or another stream, it dissipated its waters in a mossy moor among a number of treacherous-looking green bogs. In front of us was a wide stretch of moss and bog-land, through which we should evidently have some trouble in making our way.

"Oh, we are lost!" said Bess, as her courage gave way, and she was on the point of bursting into tears. "I know not where we are. We shall not get out of this to-night."

I embraced and comforted her; I kissed away her tears; I forced her to drink a little of M'Hardy's usquebaugh — blessed be the man's forethought!—which did her even more good than my caresses; I told her that we should make a last effort to get on while the

light lasted, and if the worst befell us, I would wrap her in my cloak, and find some sheltered spot where she might rest, and perhaps sleep, while I kept guard over her.

Bess was too despondent to reply, and we again climbed the hill, to avoid the moss, which seemed interminable on the lower side. But her steps were now flagging, and she leaned heavily on my arm, when an eddy of wind whirled by us, curling the mist before it in fantastic wreaths, and seeming to lift it up skywards. As we went on the mist grew more broken and scattered still; the wind was tearing it asunder, and sweeping it from the moor against the hillsides, up which it began slowly and heavily to curl. When we got up to the ridge of a mountain-spur, the view was cleared for some space around us. Low down before us a great glen opened up, and at the head of it was a dark lake flowing out into a considerable stream, which we could trace for some distance running through the moorland in a nearly straight

line, until it disappeared in the lower end of the valley.

Bess uttered a joyful exclamation. "That is Loch Muick," she cried, "and that moss must have been the moss of Monelpie; but"—and she turned to me with a look of consternation—"we have taken the wrong turning altogether, and are farther than ever from Duncan and the ponies!"

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